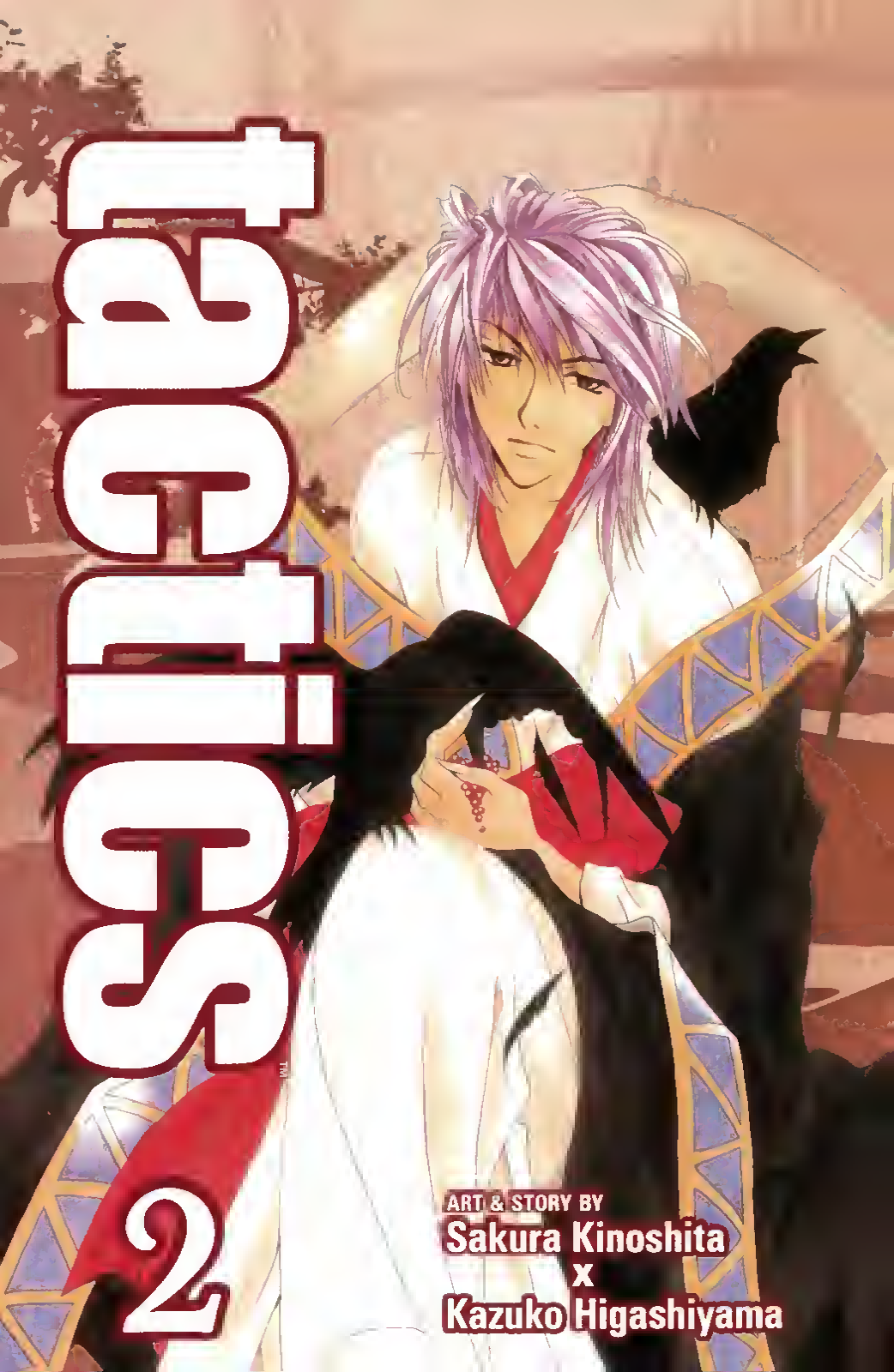
Pages



2

ART & STORY BY
Sakura Kinoshita
x
Kazuko Higashiyama

木下さくら × 東山和子

Sakura Kinoshita × Kazuko Higashiyama

tactics

tactics

Sakura Kinoshita × Kazuko Higashiyama

2

chapter 6 125

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chapter 4 5

木下さくら

東山和子

tactics

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Sakura Kinoshita × Kazuko Higashiyama

2

chapter 6 125

chapter 5 41

chapter 4 5

tactics

Volume 2
by Sakura Kinoshita and
Kazuko Higashiyama

tactics Volume 2

ART & STORY BY: Sakura Kinoshita × Kazuko Higashiyama

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CHAPTER 4

demon-eatin'
tengoo...
pwease
come out an'
save me.

YES OUR SON'S BEEN ACTING VERY STRANGE AS OF LATE
SINCE IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A NORMAL ILLNESS, WE CAME TO YOU.
POSSES-SED?
HE HIDES FROM US IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT TO FEAST ON RAW FLESH.
AND THE CATTLE ON THE NEARBY FARMS HAVE BEEN DYING UNNATURAL DEATHS WHILE OUR SON WAS IN THE AREA.
WELL, YOU'RE RIGHT IN THAT IT'S NOT THE FLU.
IF WE'RE DEALING WITH A POSSESSION, WE HAVE TO CONSIDER A FOX, A TANUKI, A SNAKE GOD, OR A EVEN CANINE GOD.
WHAT-EVER THE CASE...

AND THE DEMON-EATING TENGU BY MY SIDE IS PROOF THAT NO CASE SHALL GO UNRESOLVED!
...PROBLEMS VANISH IN THE CAPABLE HANDS OF KANTAROU ICHINOMIYA, THE STRONGEST YOUKAI BUSTER OF OUR AUSPICIOUS CENTURY!
Whether they believe you or not.
No more soy sauce on rice... or crying!
KAN-CHAN'S GETTING OFF HIS ASS AND WORKING! IT'S REAL FOOD FOR US TONIGHT!
EASY, KANTAROU. THE ENTIRE WORLD DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW I'M A TENGU.

IS HE.. OKAY?
BUT ENOUGH OF ALL THAT. LET'S GET TO BUSINESS!
whump
whump
whump

ALSO, I HAVE YOUKO.
HE'S THE LEGENDARY TENGU SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST OF ALL YOUKAI!
TENGU ...?
Hi!
Sure!

MY WIFE AND I TREASURE OUR SON, AND WE ALWAYS WILL— NO MATTER WHAT THE RUMORS SAY.
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE THIS, ICHINOMIYA SENSEI.

WELL... SINCE MY SON IS STILL AT SCHOOL, HERE'S A MAP TO MY HOUSE--YOU CAN JOIN US THERE LATER.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR!

MAP
THEY LIVE HERE?
I plan to nap.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST A WEAKLING GHOST. GO BY YOURSELF.

LOOK AT THAT, HARUKA!
I GOT DRAGGED INTO THIS AFTER ALL.
WE'LL DO THAT NEXT.
WHAT IS THAT?
THEY CALL IT A PEEKING HOLE. WHEN YOU LOOK INSIDE THE OPENING YOU'LL SEE A PICTURE SHOW OF VARIOUS LOCATIONS
LET'S DRINK SOME RAMUNE SODA IT'S SWEET AND EASY TO DIGEST.

tactics 2

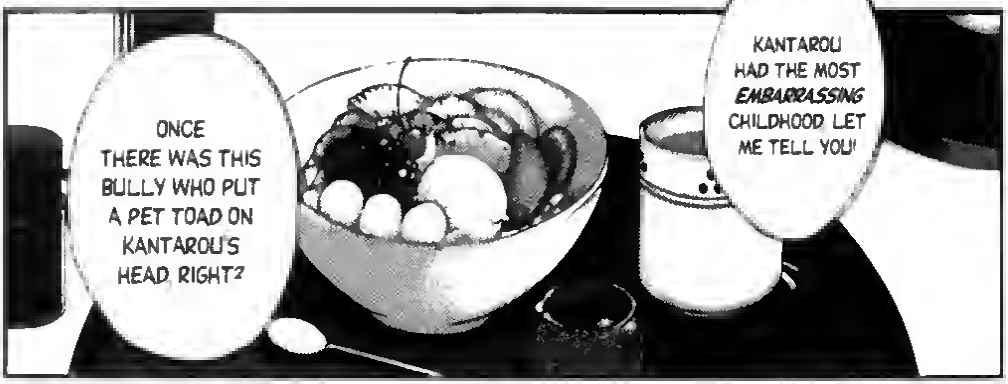
KANTAROU!
NEXT! I WANT FRIED MANJU FROM THAT STAND.
DECADENCE! ♡
THIS IS SO MUCH NICER THAN CIDER.
IT'S BURNING THROUGH MY STOMACH UP TO
DELISH!
AH WELL, IT'S INTERESTING THAT OUR CLIENT LIVES AROUND HERE.
AFTER DRAGGING ME OUT OF THE HOUSE THIS MORNING AT A RUN, YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT IGNORE THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF YOUR HEAD.
UTP
YOUR BEHAVIOR IS SUSPECT.
THIS IS THE TOWN I LIVED IN AS A BOY.

I GREW UP WANTING YOU.
I WAS OBSESSED WITH GAINING YOUR STRENGTH FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, HARUKA.
I WANT TO REPEAT THE LONELY ACTIVITIES OF MY CHILDHOOD, BUT WITH YOU BY MY SIDE.
.....
AND NOW THAT I HAVE YOU, AND WE'RE HERE...
I CAN LIVE OUT MY FANTASIES.
YOU LIE.
NONSENSE! I WAS FAMOUS IN THE AREA FOR BEING A PRODIGY.
...I'LL BET YOU WERE AS AWFUL THEN AS YOU ARE NOW.

THERE'S ONE MORE PLACE I WANT US TO VISIT, HARUKA.
HAVEN'T WE RELIVED YOUR CHILDHOOD ENOUGH?
NO!
BUT FIRST!
THE ANMITSU THEY SERVE THERE IS AMAZING!
WE HAVE TO TRY SOME WHILE WE'RE HERE.
FOLLOW ME, HARUKA!
TCH!
THIS IS WHAT MY LIFE HAS BECOME.

KANTAROU? I MUST BE SEEING THINGS!
SINCE WHEN WERE YOU BACK IN TOWN?
GRAB
I JUST REMEMBERED-- THEY DON'T PUT ENOUGH MITSUMAME IN THEIR ANMITSU HERE. LET'S LEAVE.
AND I'M BROKE.
HURRY. NOW
DID I JUST SEE YOU TRY TO IGNORE A CHILDHOOD FRIEND? YOU'VE BECOME A TOTAL BRAT!
OH. WONG GIME NO FEE, MISS YAKKO.

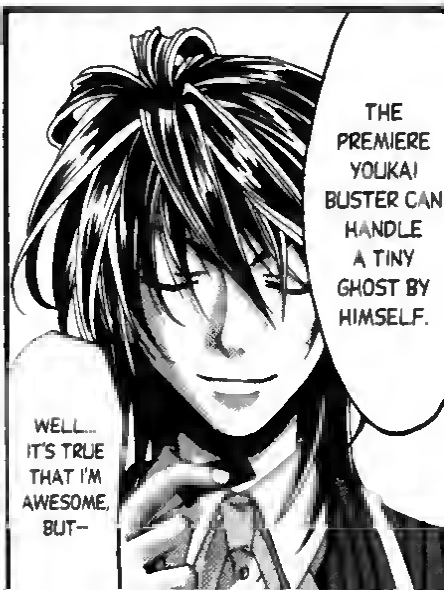
Protect me, Haruka!
whimper whine
.....
YOUR NAME'S HARUKA, BEAUTIFUL? YOU MUST BE A FRIEND OF KANTAROU'S.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
EW.
I'M YAKKO. KANTAROU AND I WERE FRIENDS AS CHILDREN, AND I WORK HERE AS A GEISHA NOW.
IF YOU EVER COME TO THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT, I HOPE YOU ASK FOR ME HARUKA, DEAR! ♡
DON'T DO IT UNLESS YOU LIKE PAIN, HARUKA.
SHE'S an "S" at Heart.
WHAT'S AN "S"?
SHFF!!
Two more anmitsu, granny!


KANTAROU HAD THE MOST EMBARRASSING CHILDHOOD. LET ME TELL YOU!
ONCE THERE WAS THIS BULLY WHO PUT A PET TOAD ON KANTAROU'S HEAD. RIGHT?

W-WE HAVE A CLIENT'S HOUSE TO GET TO, HARUKA!
I ALREADY SAID YOU DON'T NEED ME.

CLATTER
SO KANTAROU WET HIS PANTS. ISN'T THAT PRICELESS?
HA HA HA HA!

~~!!
YOU HEARD HIM, KANTAROU— OFF YOU GO.
I'M NOT DONE EATING YET. AND I'M TIRED FROM ALL THE WALKING.

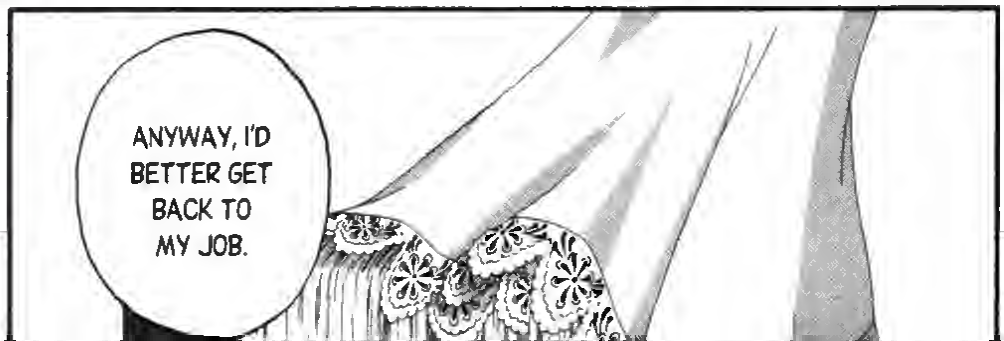

THE PREMIERE YOUKAI BUSTER CAN HANDLE A TINY GHOST BY HIMSELF.
WELL... IT'S TRUE THAT I'M AWESOME, BUT—

HA HA HA! PRICELESS!
WHAT DID I EVER DO TO EVERY-ONE?!
KANTAROU EVENTUALLY LEARNED THAT YOU NEED A BACKBONE TO SURVIVE
HE BUILT UP HIS SELF-DEFENSE TO THE POINT WHERE NOTHING CAN PENETRATE IT
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE CONSIDERING HOW MUCH HE TORTURES EVERYONE NOW
WAS HE BULLIED WHEN HE WAS LITTLE?
IT'S TOO MUCH FUN TO TEASE HIM.
I CAN BE SUCH A BULLY
SO, HARUKA...
THEN--

ARE YOU THAT DEMON-EATING TENGU KANTAROU WOULDN'T SHUT UP ABOUT?
カリ
チャン
KANTAROU'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM EVERYONE ELSE
HE ALSO HAD A TENDENCY TO CLAM UP WHEN HE WAS BULLIED, WHICH WAS WHY I USED TO STEP IN AND HELP
HE WAS A REAL DOWNER, UNSURPRISINGLY AND HE DIDN'T TRUST ANYONE
WHY DID YOU THINK I WAS THE DEMON-EATING TENGU?
WELL...
HA HA! KIDDING, KIDDING—LIKE YOU COULD BE A TENGU.
HEH HEH
HEH HEH
HE ACTUALLY TOLD PEOPLE ABOUT THAT?
It explains the lack of friends

BUT HE SAID HE WANTED TO GET STRONGER SO HE COULD PROTECT SOMETHING
THE DEMON-EATING TENGU WAS HIS IDOL. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY--HE LOOKED UP TO THAT KIND OF STRENGTH.
SO! SEEING HOW HAPPY HE IS THESE DAYS, AND HOW HE'S ATTACHED TO YOU AT THE HIP...I COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER.

...HUMAN.
IT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE HE FINALLY *DID* FIND THAT TENGU.


ANYWAY, I'D BETTER GET BACK TO MY JOB.

IF YOU TWO ARE FRIENDS...
...I HOPE THINGS STAY THAT WAY.
HARUKA, DARLING?
.....

MY BELLS ARE RINGING FAINTLY.
Ching
Ching
Ching
WHEN I TOLD HIM AN EXORCIST WAS COMING, HE FOUGHT SO MUCH THAT I HAD TO SEDATE HIM.
SENSEI, PLEASE... WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO OUR BABY?
HE'LL BE FINE, MA'AM.
JUST TAKE HEART AND HAVE FAITH IN HIM.

OM
SUMBHA
NISUMBHA
HUM.
GYARIKANDA
GYARIKANDA
HUM.
GYARIKANDA
HAYA HUM
ANAUYA.
?!

B-BUT HE'S SEDATED! HOW COULD HE WAKE UP?!
WHAT?!
AAAH!!
THROB
!!

IT'S NOT A HUMAN WHO IS POSSESSED... THE BOY'S A DEMON DISGUISED AS HUMAN!
OW! NOT... AGAIN!
THE WOUND ON MY CHEST IS ACTING UP!
I FINALLY GOT THE LIFE I WANTED.
DON'T RUIN THIS FOR ME!

WH-
WHY
ARE
YOU
DOING
THIS?
GRIP

NOW'S MY CHANCE— I NEED TO THROW A PAPER TALISMAN OR SAY A SUTRA!
shuffle
NNGH!

HARUKA!
KLUNK

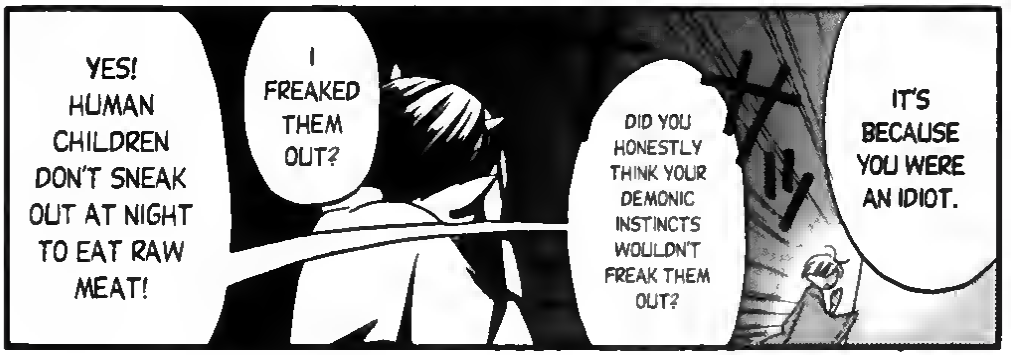
But yeah-- ow.
HEH HEH!
I-I KNEW YOU'D COME FOR ME.
Hff
Haaah
Haa
WHY DO YOU HAVE SO MUCH FAITH IN ME?
!

I CAME HERE TO EAT A DEMON!
ARE YOU... THE DEMON-EATING TENGU?!
WHAT?!
?!
YOU JUST SAVED ME. THAT PROVES I WAS RIGHT TO.
I DIDN'T COME HERE FOR YOU.

STOP IT, HARUKA!
?!
.....!
WAAAH!
WAAAH!
.....
pat
I WAS SURE YOU WERE GOING TO EAT HIM THAT TIME.
PHEW! WHAT A RELIEF.

YOU ARE A DEMON RIGHT?
WHY DID YOU PRETEND TO BE THAT COUPLE'S SON?
SNIFF.
HIC!
WELL... WHEN MY REAL PARENTS DIED, I SAW THOSE HUMANS PRAYING AT A SHRINE.
THEY WANTED TO HAVE A CHILD.
I WAS SO LONELY THAT I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF-- I CHANGED THEIR MEMORIES SO THEY THOUGHT I WAS THEIRS.
THEY TURNED OUT TO BE REALLY NICE. I LOVED LIVING HERE.

FLICK
OW!
THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
WHY DID DADDY AND MOMMY CALL YOU HERE?
DO THEY HATE ME NOW?
SNIFF


YES! HUMAN CHILDREN DON'T SNEAK OUT AT NIGHT TO EAT RAW MEAT!
I FREAKED THEM OUT?
DID YOU HONESTLY THINK YOUR DEMONIC INSTINCTS WOULDN'T FREAK THEM OUT?
IT'S BECAUSE YOU WERE AN IDIOT.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN LIVING WITH YOUR POWERS OR LIVING WITH YOUR FAMILY, WHICH WOULD YOU PICK?
LISTEN.

I...I KNOW THEY'RE NOT MY REAL FAMILY
BUT I STILL WANT TO LIVE WITH MY NEW MOMMY AND DADDY!
REMEMBER THAT YOU SAID THAT.

WOBBLE
...I COULDN'T EAT A DEMON AGAIN.
AND THIS TIME IT WASN'T BECAUSE KANTAROU CALLED FOR ME.
SOMETHING'S BEEN WRONG WITH ME SINCE THE SEAL WAS BROKEN
I'M...I'M LIKE A LOSER.

EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT NOW.
I USED THESE BEADS TO SEAL AWAY THE SPIRIT POSSESSING YOUR SON.
OF COURSE WE WILL. HE'S EVERYTHING TO US!
REGARDLESS OF WHAT MAY HAPPEN FROM HERE ON OUT..
..PLEASE JUST BELIEVE IN HIM AND I'M SURE THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE

WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS THE PLACE I WANTED TO SHOW YOU HARUKA
THERE IT IS!
.....
I MADE IT WHEN I WAS A BOY. I CAME HERE DAILY TO CHAT WITH YOU.
IT'S A SMALL SHRINE TO THE DEMON-EATING TENGU.

I WASN'T LONELY, YOU KNOW.
IT WAS JUST CRAMPED INSIDE THAT ROCK.
BEING ABLE TO MOVE FREELY IS MORE TO MY TASTE.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU NOW?!
Yeek!!
HA HA.
MWA HA.
HEE
HEH HEH!

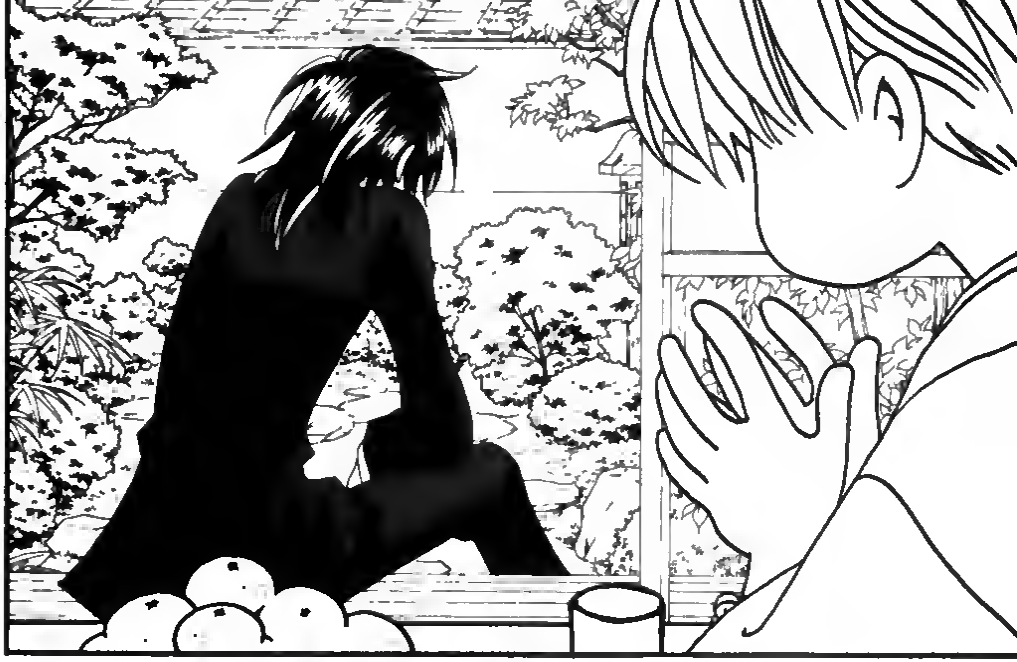
BUT WHEN I GWOW UP AN' GET STWONG...
...I CAN SAVE YOU FIWST.

I'm a folklore researcher and youkai exterminator. I'm also brilliant and talented at multi-tasking. Yo!
Seeking Employment
Greetings! My name is Kantarou Ichinomiya.
The one with the ears is Youko-chan. Yet another youkai. I named the two of them.
DUH.
According to legend, this is the strongest youkai--the demon-eating tengu Haruka. Yours truly broke his seal.
That makes me their master.
They're forced to obey whatever human gives them names.
We're a handful?! You're the worst master ever!
I could throw this.
And they can be a handful.

CHAPTER 5

tactics

I UNDERSTAND THAT HARUKA'S SUFFERING FROM A CULTURE CLASH. WESTERNIZATION IS NEVER EASY, AND I ONLY RECENTLY RELEASED HIM.
HE'S NOT UNLIKE TAROU URASHIMA, REALLY. ADAPTING CAN BE VERY STRESSFUL.
CLACK
BUT EVERY LIVING CREATURE HAS TO DEAL WITH STRESS--IT'S A NATURAL PART OF LIFE.
HUMANS HAVE DEVELOPED A UNIQUE METHOD OF COPING WITH IT.
SO LET'S RELAX THE HUMAN WAY...
...WITH A VISIT TO THE HOT SPRINGS.



ACKNOWL-
EDGE ME!
ACKNOWL-
EDGE,
DAMMIT!
Argh.

DON'T YOU REALIZE HOW GRACIOUS I'M BEING?! I'VE NOTICED YOU BROODING LATELY--I'M TRYING TO SHOW MY SUPPORT!

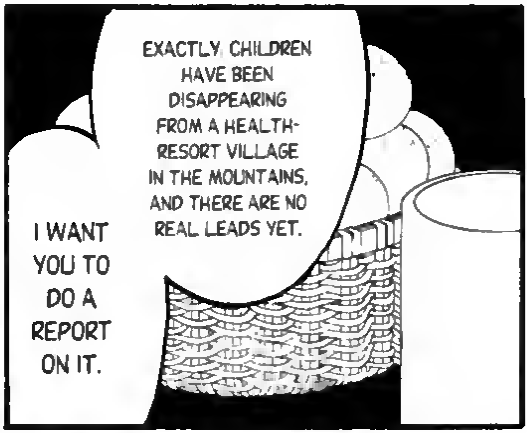
HEY, KANTAROU?
come on!
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE--NOW YOU'VE STRESSED ME SO BADLY THAT I NEED THE HOT SPRINGS!

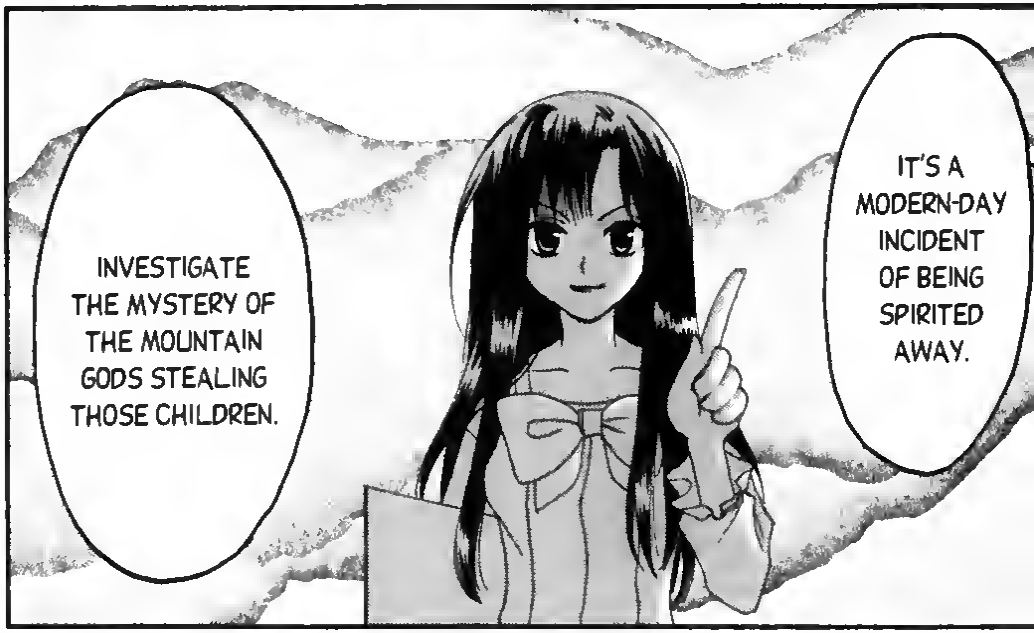
tactics 2
EXCUSE ME?
I HEARD THE WORD "HOT" FOLLOWED BY "SPRING"!
we don't have money for that crap!
ズチ
TELL ME SOMETHING.
AM I... REALLY THE DEMON EATING TENGU?
OH! WELCOME HOME, YOUKO-CHAN. HOW WAS WORK, AND DID YOU GET PAID?
AAGH!
sniff
sniff
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH HARUKA? HE'S IGNORING ME!
AND NOT MAKING SENSE.
whimper
AAA
YOU WASTE EVERYTHING AND YOU SUCK! IF ANYONE NEEDS A VACATION IT'S ME!
AAA
BUT, YEAH.
HARUKA-CHAN'S BEEN A LITTLE OFF LATELY.

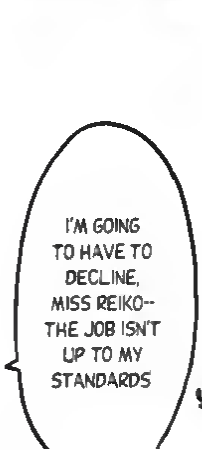
Growl!
OH... SORRY.
I WORRY WHEN YOU BROOD LIKE THIS.
Pat
SO YOU'LL ACKNOWLEDGE HER BUT NOT ME? THAT'S NOT FAIR, YOU STUPID TENGU!
ポム
STOP AND LOOK AT YOURSELF.
HUH?
I NEED THAT HOT SPRING TO DEAL WITH THIS! NOW YOU KNOW WHO TO BLAME.
SHUT UUUUP.
Somebody stop Hiiiiim.
ALL RIGHT, NEW RULE--EVERY YOUKAI IN THE HOUSE HAS TO STOP GIVING ME A HARD TIME!

MISSA REIKO!
WHY HELLO HARUKA ♡
IF IT'S A HOT SPRING YOU WANT, I COULD BRING YOU TO ONE.
UM.. YOU SAID YOU'D BRING US TO A SPRING?
HEY, HAS YOUR HAIR GOTTEN GRAYER?
whisper
That's your fault, thank you!
I feel for you.
ACTUALLY, SENSEI...
I CAME HERE WITH A JOB OFFER.
A JOB AT A SPRING, I PRESUME.

DISAPPEARING KIDS. HOW RELAXING.
But free Hot Springs!


EXACTLY. CHILDREN HAVE BEEN DISAPPEARING FROM A HEALTH-RESORT VILLAGE IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND THERE ARE NO REAL LEADS YET.
I WANT YOU TO DO A REPORT ON IT.


INVESTIGATE THE MYSTERY OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS STEALING THOSE CHILDREN.
IT'S A MODERN-DAY INCIDENT OF BEING SPIRITED AWAY.


I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DECLINE, MISS REIKO-- THE JOB ISN'T UP TO MY STANDARDS

WHEE!
HOT SPRIIIING! ♡
yay!

.....
HM? OH, BUT OF COURSE!!
DO WE GET TO COME, TOO?
THIS IS YOUKO ASKING

tactics 2

IGNORE HIM. HE NEEDS THE WORK. SO WHERE IS THIS PLACE?
.....
ゴニョゴニョ

LET'S SEE... IN SUGINO VILLAGE, S PREFECTURE.

IT'S A SERIOUS SUBJECT-- UNLIKE THE POPULAR FOLKLORE PROPAGATED BY OLD WIVES AND DESPERATE PARENTS.
I MAY HIDE IT WELL, BUT I HOLD MYSELF IN VERY HIGH ESTEEM AS A FOLKLORE RESEARCHER.
AND THE POPULAR CULTURE FACET OF FOLKLORE IS AN IMPORTANT FACET INDEED!
THEN LET'S GET OUR BUTTS IN SOME HOT WATER!
.....

REMEMBER TO UNWIND ONCE WE REACH THOSE HOT SPRINGS.
WHAT LUCK, HARUKA!

TURN
FREEZE

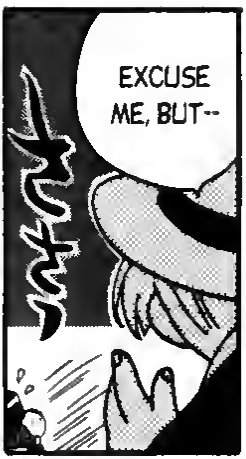
THIS WON'T GO WELL.
I SAW EVIL ON THAT FACE

AAAH, WHAT MAGNIFICENTLY CLEAN AIR!

OH, MISS!
I KNOW BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER PLACE I WANTED TO VISIT FIRST. WHERE WAS IT?

OUR INN'S IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, KAN-CHAN.
IT'S TOO BAD MISS REIKO WAS SUDDENLY CALLED AWAY ON OTHER BUSINESS.

LISTEN, HARUKA-CHAN.
HM. I TAKE IT THE LOCAL KIDNAPPINGS HAVE MADE THE VILLAGERS SUSPICIOUS OF STRANGERS.


EXCUSE ME, BUT--

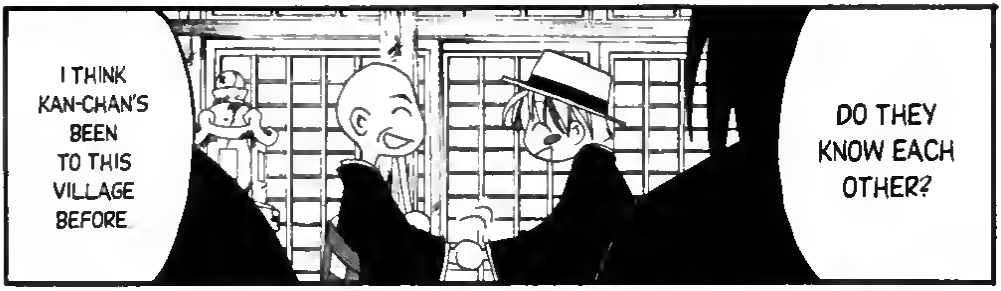
HUH?

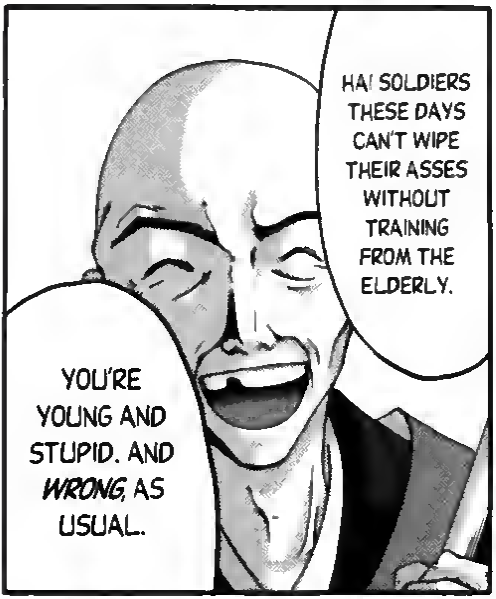
MISS?

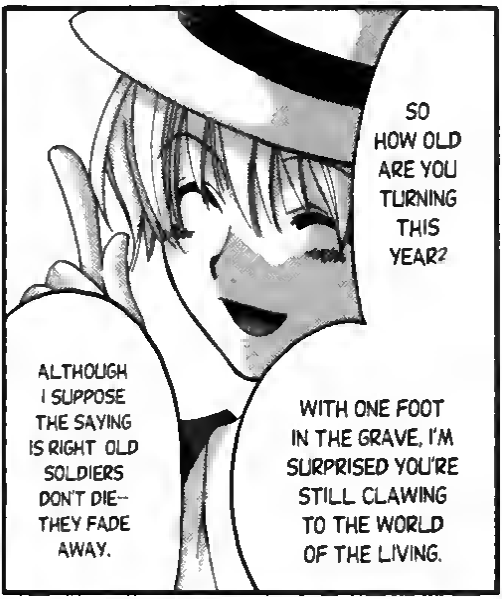
WHAT?! DO MY EYES DECEIVE ME?!
I NEVER EXPECTED TO FIND SO FAIR A FLOWER IN A MOUNTAIN SUCH AS THIS!
H-HUH?!
HOW VAIN TO CALL IT FATE, AND YET... ANYWAY, I CAN'T FIND SOUAN TEMPLE.
IT'S THAT WAY! ♡
HEH-HEH
ALSO, TELL ME ABOUT THE LOCAL DISAPPEARANCES.
Ask about the local disappearances!
O-OF COURSE!
WE'RE ALL TERRIFIED ABOUT THE CHILDREN WHO WENT MISSING IN THE MOUNTAINS

THE POLICE SAID THE CASES DON'T LOOK LIKE KIDNAPPINGS.
BUT THEY'RE ALSO PROBABLY NOT ACCIDENTS, SINCE NOBODY'S FOUND ANY CLOTHES OR CLUES LEFT BEHIND.
ONLY ONE CHILD HAS COME BACK-- THE FIRST ONE TO GO MISSING. BUT HE CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
IT CAN'T BE HUMANS DOING ALL THAT, YOU KNOW? SO EVERYONE SAYS IT'S THE WORK OF THE EVIL BEINGS IN THE MOUNTAINS
THE WORK OF A MOUNTAIN BEING, HM?
I'M STARTING TO THINK...
...THIS JOB *DOES* SUIT ME.

UNKAI-SAN! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN AGES!
MY GOODNESS! KANTAROU ICHINOMIYA?
I NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE YOU AGAIN.


I THINK KAN-CHAN'S BEEN TO THIS VILLAGE BEFORE.
DO THEY KNOW EACH OTHER?


HA! SOLDIERS THESE DAYS CAN'T WIPE THEIR ASSES WITHOUT TRAINING FROM THE ELDERLY.
YOU'RE YOUNG AND STUPID. AND *WRONG*, AS USUAL.


SO HOW OLD ARE YOU TURNING THIS YEAR?
ALTHOUGH I SUPPOSE THE SAYING IS RIGHT. OLD SOLDIERS DON'T DIE--THEY FADE AWAY.
WITH ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE, I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE STILL CLAWING TO THE WORLD OF THE LIVING.

IT'S LIKE HAVING ANOTHER KAN-CHAN! QUICK. KILL ME!
THEY HAVE AN... INTENSE AURA. IT'S PRACTICALLY FORMING A FORCE FIELD.
I can't get close!

フッ!
FORCE
!?

MY ANCESTORS HAD BUDDHIST POWERS SIMILAR TO KANTAROU'S.
WELL, THAT'S ALL I KNOW, REALLY.
I GUESS HE'S LIKE KAN-CHAN THAT WAY, TOO
WAIT— YOU KNOW WHAT WE ARE?
KANTAROU. DID YOU ACTUALLY BRING ENSLAVED YOUKAI WITH YOU?
THIS VILLAGE PRACTICES UNDER MOUNTAIN BELIEF. A GOD LIVES IN THE MOUNTAINS AND PROTECTS OUR PEOPLE.
THEY WERE INVOLVED IN THE GOD SHIFT, RIGHT? IT'S AN OLD LEGEND IN THIS VILLAGE.
THEN, ONE NIGHT, A NEW GOD DESCENDED TO THE BEDSIDE OF MY ANCESTOR AND SAID HE WOULD SAVE OUR VILLAGE.
BUT, FOR A PERIOD OF TIME, WE HAD A STRING OF POOR HARVESTS. ALL THE PRAYING IN THE WORLD DIDN'T SEEM TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE MOUNTAIN GOD.

BUT MY ANCESTOR APPEASED HIM, TOO. IMPRESSIVE, EH?
IT'S LIKE A FAIRYTALE! BUT WITH MORE STARVING

THE BAD CROPS STOPPED IMMEDIATELY, SO WE STARTED WORSHIPPING THE NEW GOD. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT ANGERED THE *OLD* GOD
THE OLD GOD WAS SO FURIOUS AT THE CHANGE OF FAITH THAT HE WENT ON A RAMPAGE.

I ASSUME YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE DISAPPEAR-ANCES?
THAT'S WHAT DREW ME OUT TO THIS NECK OF THE WOODS.

I WISH MY ANCESTORS WERE HERE TO TAKE CARE OF *THIS* MESS.
WE'RE STARTING TO LOSE HOPE.

YEEK!
AGH!

OH, PLEASE. I JUST LIKE SAVING MOPPETS.
DID IT?
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

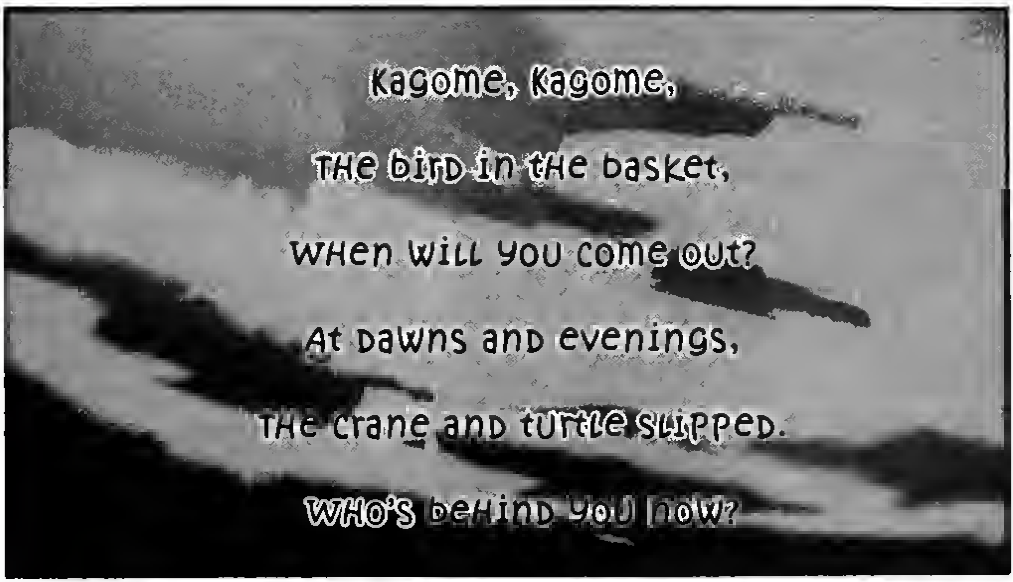
WHATEVER I GUESS YOU'RE BETTER THAN NOTHING.
BUT I'M KEEPING MY EYE ON YOU AND YOUR MUCH-QUOTED "EXCELLENCE."
THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY, SIR.

Kagome, kagome, the bird in the basket...

THE CHILDREN LOOK PRETTY RELAXED, CONSIDERING WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THEIR PEERS.
OH-- THERE'S AN ADULT KEEPING WATCH. PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA.

I'LL MAKE SURE YOU WON'T NEED THAT CHAPERONE FOR LONG, KIDDOS.
WHAT ARE THEY SINGING?

LOOK AT THE TIME. WE'D BETTER GET TO AN INN.


Kagome, Kagome,
The bird in the basket,
When will you come out?
At dawns and evenings,
The crane and turtle slipped.
Who's behind you now?

IT'S FULL OF FOLKLORE REFERENCES. THE "BIRD IN THE BASKET" COULD BE AN EMBRYO SO WHEN THE CRANE AND TURTLE--SYMBOLS OF LONGEVITY--EVENTUALLY "SLIP" THAT'S A REFERENCE TO MISCARRIAGE
THERE'S ANOTHER THEORY THAT THE "CRANE" WAS A PROSTITUTE AND THE "TURTLE" WAS HER YOUNG LOVER, AND THEY ELOPED BUT WERE CAUGHT BY THE GUARDS IN THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT.

IT'S A GAME. AFTER THE SONG, THE CHILD IN THE MIDDLE GUESSES WHO'S STANDING BEHIND HIM.
THOSE ARE SOME WEIRD LYRICS. WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

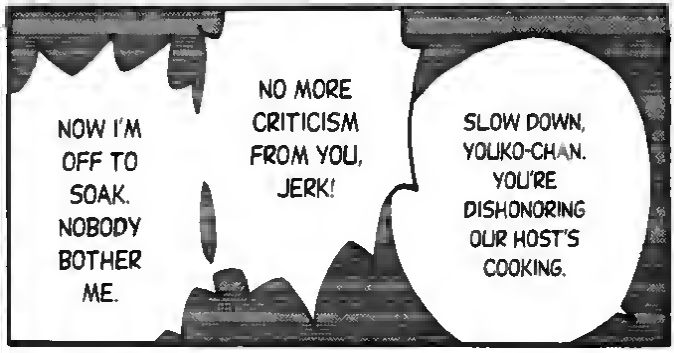
SOME THINK IT'S A CODE TO THE TREASURE OF THE TOKUGAWA, THE JEWISH STAR OF DAVID, OR A NUMBER OF OTHER--
I'M SORRY I ASKED!
YIKES!
THOSE ARE DEPRESSING AS HELL FOR A KIDS' SONG!
OR IT MAY BE ABOUT THE DEATH PENALTY IN OLDEN DAYS. CRIMINALS WERE PLACED IN BOXES AND CARRIED TO THEIR PLACES OF EXECUTION--THEIR EXECUTIONERS USUALLY STOOD BEHIND THEM BEFORE THE DECAPITATION, YOU SEE.
or it may be about thinning out the ranks of children...
HEH HEH.
DID YOU PLAY THAT AS A BOY?
HM? WHAT'S THE MATTER HARUKA?
NOT REALLY.
AW. DOES THAT MEAN YOU CARE?

I KNEW THE PUBLISHER PAYING FOR THREE PEOPLE WAS FISHY.
TRY THIS, HARUKA.
THEY ONLY PAID FOR TWO!
NO WONDER MISS REIKO DITCHED AT THE LAST MINUTE.
MA'AM, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOUKO-CHAN FOR US.
WE'LL BE WORKING TOMORROW, TOO, YOUKO-CHAN. THE INVESTIGATION COULD TAKE ALL DAY.
I HATE MY LIFE.
PAT
I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR HELP TOMORROW

DIRECT, BUT SYMPATHETIC. I UNDERSTAND PUTTING YOUR CHILD FIRST.

BY ALL MEANS. I COULD REALLY USE THE HELP— I HAVE A CHILD AT HOME, AND WITH ALL THE DISAPPEARANCES...
CLUB
CLUB
WELL, LET'S JUST SAY I'D RATHER HAVE FEWER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT AROUND HERE

WE SHOULD GET GOING OURSELVES.
?


NOW I'M OFF TO SOAK. NOBODY BOTHER ME.
NO MORE CRITICISM FROM YOU, JERK!
SLOW DOWN, YOUKO-CHAN. YOU'RE DISHONORING OUR HOST'S COOKING.

SHE'S RATHER IMPULSIVE.
SHE ALWAYS KEEPS BUSY. SHE'S AS BUSY AS A...WHAT'S A BUSY ANIMAL?
SLURP
I'M GETTING IN AT LEAST FIVE SOAKINGS TODAY!

DO YOU ENJOY DISAPPOINTING ME?!
I hate it already.
NO.
!
TO THE HOT SPRINGS, YOU SILLY GOOSE.
tower
GRRRRR!
grind
grind
grit
tower
HARUKA, MAKE A BEELINE FOR THE BATHS!
DAMMIT, KANTAROU!
MEN
STOP. CONTROLLING. ME!
!
HARUKA! STAND!
YOU CAN MARCH FASTER THAN THAT!
HARUKA, FORWARD MARCH!

NOW ISN'T THIS NICE?
HEY, HAAARUKA
STAY OVER THERE!
I DON'T WANT TO EVEN *GUESS* WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING
YOU PROBABLY WANT TO SPLASH ME OR SWIM AROUND IN CHILDISH CIRCLES OR SOMETHING
COME ON, NOW. I'M A BIG BOY.
AND BIG BOYS PLAY *BIG BOY* GAMES.

IF YOU WANT TO SURPRISE SOMEONE, YOU HAVE TO DO IT RIGHT!
THIS IS SO UNFAIR...
BLOOP!
LIKE THIS! ♡
YOU...
YEOW!
YOU HURT MY FEELINGS, HARUKA.
NOW I'LL HURT YOUR-- HUH?
...SHOULDN'T BE IN A POSITION OF POWER!

HEY!
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!
Gaaack!
BUT HE'S NOT BREATHING! I MUST GIVE HIM MOUTH-TO-MOUTH!
I...I THINK IT'S A YOUKAI!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE FAINTED FROM THE HEAT.
OH. I THINK HE JUST WOKE UP.
ぽちくう

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LITTLE FELLOW?
ぽふ
HARUKA!
DON'T IGNORE ME!
AaH!
HARUKA, BUTT BACK IN THE WATER!
DON'T OVERDO IT IN SPRINGS THIS HOT, HM?

LOOK AT THAT.
KAN-CHAN'S MAKING HIS WORK FACE
WHEN HE GETS LIKE THAT, HE ALMOST SEEMS RESPONSIBLE
.....
I DON'T SEE IT.

I SHOULD PROBABLY TRY SPEAKING WITH THE GOD HERE FIRST.
I'VE HEARD IT'S A WHITE TENGU. HARUKA
INDEED. BLACK TENGU LIKE YOU ARE BORN AS TENGU. BUT WHITE TENGU ARE HUMANS WHO FELL INTO THE STATE OF BEING TENGU.
A WHITE TENGU DON'T THOSE START AS OVERCONFIDENT HIGH PRIESTS AND SHAMANS?

KANTA-
ROU
YES?
...WHICH MEANS YOU'RE HALFWAY TO BECOMING ONE.
YOU'RE SILLY. HUSH.
?!
.....

HARUKA?
HMPH.
SO *YOU'RE* THE GOD HERE.

SUGINO.

IT'S BEEN SO LOOONG! I MISSED YOU, DEMON EATER!
SOMEONE BROKE YOUR SEAL!
S...S...
TELL ME IT WASN'T THAT HUMAN YOU WERE WITH
WAIT A MINUTE. YOU HAVE A MASTER?
HUH?
IT DOESN'T MATTER--I HAVE A NEW ONE.
ER.. YOU HAD A NAME, DIDN'T YOU? WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?
...YOU CAN CALL ME "HARUKA" NOW.
.....

HARU--
Haruka! Where are you?!
WAAAAH!
I have... a treat! Yes! So come back to me and I'll give it to you!
HUH?!
!!

I'LL SHOW YOU EXACTLY WHY A HUMAN DOESN'T DESERVE YOU
A LITTLE EXPERIMENT JUST WATCH
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HE WON'T CARE THAT IT MIGHT PUT YOU IN DANGER.
HE'LL CALL FOR YOU.
THAT'S WHY I CHOSE TO RULE OVER *THEM*.
HUMANS ARE SELFISH CREATURES. THEY ONLY SEE THE YOUKAI THEY'VE NAMED AS TOOLS.

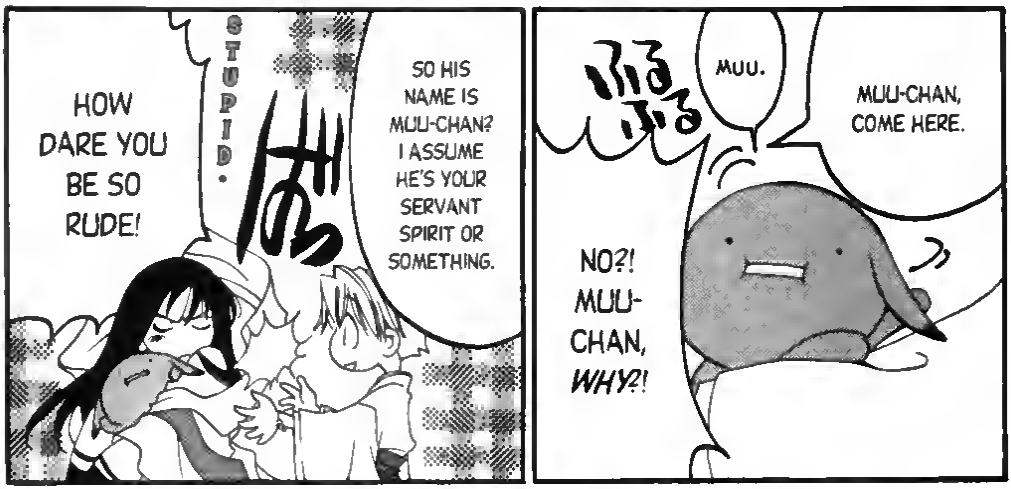
.....
YOU USED TO AGREE WITH ME, DEMON EATER.
ire
ire
ire
WHY ISN'T HE CALLING FOR ME?
HE COULD JUST ORDER ME TO SAVE HIM!

NOW I JUST WANT TO HURT HIM MORE!
NO! I don't wanna!
WHAT-EVER, JUST... STOP THAT
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
!
THAT... THAT SOUNDS LIKE HONEST SERVITUDE COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!
YOU IDIOT!
TAKE THAT!
AGH, IT'S GETTING WORSE!

HUH?
YOU'RE. THAT LITTLE GUY FROM YESTERDAY.
MUU.

?!
?
I COULD'VE HURT YOUR PRECIOUS BODY, MY LOVELY EMBODIMENT OF SWEETNESS!
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE, MY DARLING LITTLE MUU! WHY DID YOU SHIELD THIS MONSTER?!
TMP
HE WAS TESTING ME. TYPICAL.
HMPH.
WHATEVER ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
...YOU KNEW WE WERE WATCHING, DIDN'T YOU?
.....

I HEAR THAT YOU AND HARUKA GO WAY BACK. PLEASE BE GENTLE WITH HIM, MR. GOD
POI
WOW, I HATE YOU.
I'M SO SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE! HAVING A GOD HEAL MY WOUNDS AND WELCOME ME SO COURTEOUSLY IS A PRETTY GREAT HONOR.
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH


HOW DARE YOU BE SO RUDE!
STUPID.
SO HIS NAME IS MUU-CHAN? I ASSUME HE'S YOUR SERVANT SPIRIT OR SOMETHING.
MUU.
MUU-CHAN, COME HERE.
NO?! MUU-CHAN, WHY?!

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?
MUU-CHAN IS MY WIFE!
DEMON EATER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
HOW DO YOU MAKE BABIES?! CAN I WRITE A PAPER ON IT?!
SHUT UP! OUR LOVE IS PURELY PLATONIC.
JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT AND GO. YOU'RE TURNING MY STOMACH.
OH! WELL, I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE DISAPPEARING CHILDREN.
THAT?
EASY.

I'M NOT THE ONE TAKING THEM.
MY POWER IS LIMITED TO THIS MOUNTAIN, AND I ALREADY LOOKED FOR THEM HERE. CAN'T HELP YOU. BYE!
HM...HE DOESN'T LIKE TO HIDE HIS HOSTILITY, DOES HE?
HE'S HATED HUMANS FOR YEARS.
CLEARLY
PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE HE WAS ONCE ONE HIMSELF.

LET'S GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE. I WANT TO TALK TO THAT BOY WHO DISAPPEARED AND CAME BACK.
YOU WANNA KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?
ALREADY TOLD EVERYONE— I DON'T REMEMBER
ching
UM... SORRY
WOULD YOU ALL STOP ASKING? I'M SICK OF IT!
WHAT A BRAT.
AND I WANNA GO PLAY NOW, SO BYE.
また

YES.
HE USED TO BE SO QUIET. THE OTHER CHILDREN ALWAYS PICKED ON HIM.
ARE YOU HIS MOTHER?
..BUT I ALMOST THINK MY BOY BEING TAKEN WAS A GOOD THING.
I DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD BE SAYING THIS.
THE VILLAGE CHILDREN ACTUALLY LOOK UP TO HIM NOW
BUT SINCE HE'S COME BACK TO US, HE'S BECOME SO MUCH MORE CHEERFUL AND HAS LEARNED TO COMMUNICATE
The bird in the basket...
Kagome, kagome...

COME.
IT'S TIME FOR US TO GO.
YOU'RE A CHOSEN CHILD OF GOD.
CONGRATU-LATIONS.
WHEN WILL YOU COME OUT?
AT DAWNS AND EVENINGS, THE CRANE AND TURTLE SLIPPED.
WHO'S BEHIND YOU NOW?
IS IT... YASUO-KUN?

DEMON EATER!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WATCHING THEM
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU LISTEN TO THAT STUPID HUMAN! WHERE IS HE?
HE HAD BUSINESS WITH THE PRIEST AT THE TEMPLE, I THINK.
MAYBE. I WAS JUST TOLD TO "WATCH OVER THE KIDS PLAYING IN THE MOUNTAIN."
THE KIDS?
WHAT, ARE YOU MAKING SURE THEY DON'T DISAPPEAR?

BE HONEST WITH ME
HOW DID THAT HUMAN BREAK YOUR SEAL?
I HAVE NO IDEA.
I WENT TO YOUR SHRINE REPEATEDLY, DEMON EATER.
IT WAS ABOUT WHEN I TURNED FROM A HUMAN INTO A TENGU, AND I HAD FAITH IN MY POWERS.
BUT I COULDN'T BREAK YOUR SEAL.
AND MY POWERS SHOULD BE *MUCH* STRONGER THAN A HUMAN'S.

WHO SEALED YOU THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, ANYWAY?
I...ER... HUH?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I DON'T...

I CAN'T REMEMBER I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM BACK THEN!
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I WAS SEALED!

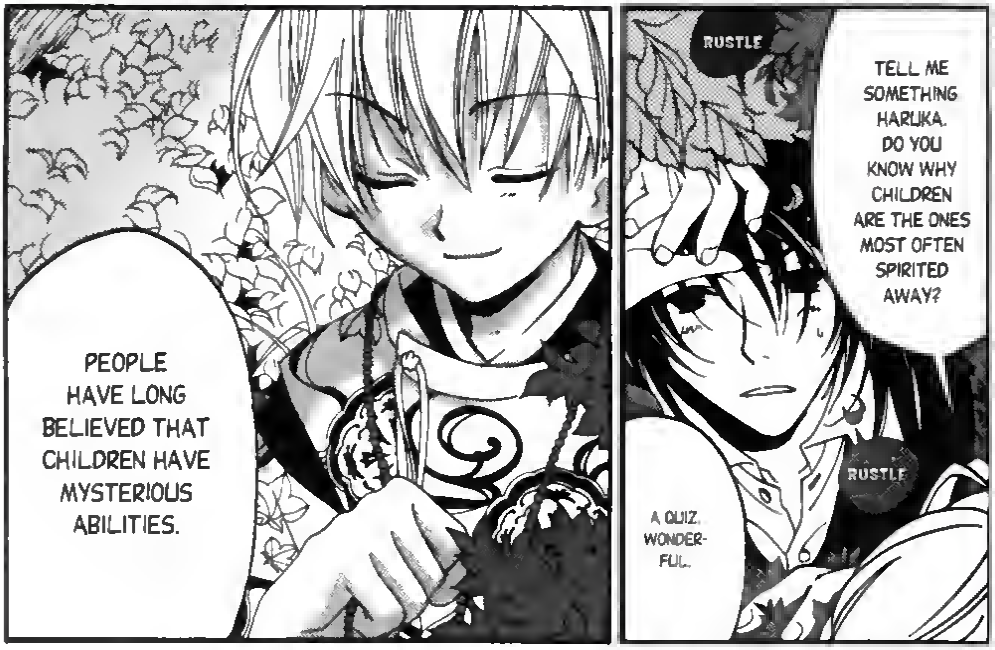
NOW I SEE.
AND WHERE EXACTLY IS THAT SEAL, MAY I ASK?
HM... SO THEY REALLY JUST PLAYED "KAGOME" ALL DAY?
.....

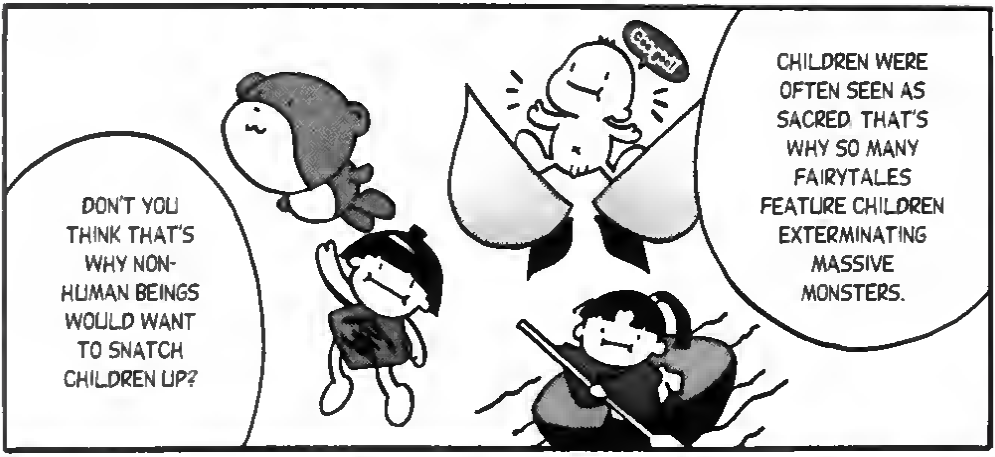
AND AFTER I GENEROUSLY BROUGHT YOU TO A HOT SPRING TO CHEER UP!
SHUT UP.
IT'S NOT EVEN YOUR MONEY.
THE nerve!
ガクガク
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, HARUKA? YOU'RE MOODY AGAIN! WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT BEING MOODY?!
ガラ
THE CHILDREN DEPRESSED ME. THEIR GAME WAS STUPID AND IRRITATING.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? IT'S COMPLETELY BASED ON LUCK--AND THE MORE CHILDREN THERE ARE, THE LOWER THE CHANCE OF WINNING
AN ENTIRE DAY OF PLAYING AND NOT ONE OF THEM WON.
REALLY?
ACTUALLY... I GUESS *ONE* WON.

THERE HE IS!
KAN-CHAN, YOU'RE BACK!
THE OWNER'S DAUGHTER NEVER CAME HOME TODAY!
.. AND THE OTHER KIDS SHE WENT OUT WITH ALREADY CAME BACK.
.....
IS SOME-THING WRONG?
MR. ICHINO-MIYA.
ONE OF THE GIRLS.
HARUKA... WHO WON THE GAME?

UNKAI-SAN T-TOLD ME ABOUT YOU.
HE SAID THAT IF ANYBODY COULD SAVE US, YOU WOULD BE THE ONE.
PLEASE, SAVE MY DAUGHTER!
...IT'S ALL RIGHT, MA'AM.
I SWEAR YOU'LL HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER BACK BY MORNING.

I DON'T GET IT.
WHY ARE WE CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN *NOW*?
WE HAVE TO GET THERE BEFORE THE MORNING CROW OF DAWN. HURRY UP NOW.
THE MORNING CROW... THAT'S WHEN INHUMAN CREATURES RETURN TO THE HEAVENS


PEOPLE HAVE LONG BELIEVED THAT CHILDREN HAVE MYSTERIOUS ABILITIES.
RUSTLE
TELL ME SOMETHING HARUKA. DO YOU KNOW WHY CHILDREN ARE THE ONES MOST OFTEN SPIRITED AWAY?
A QUIZ. WONDERFUL.
RUSTLE


DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S WHY NON-HUMAN BEINGS WOULD WANT TO SNATCH CHILDREN UP?
Gasp!
CHILDREN WERE OFTEN SEEN AS SACRED THAT'S WHY SO MANY FAIRYTALES FEATURE CHILDREN EXTERMINATING MASSIVE MONSTERS.

...WAS A SYSTEM FOR CHOOSING CHILDREN.
THE KAGOME GAME...

WHO'S BEHIND YOU NOW?
I TOLD YOU A BIT ABOUT THE SONG'S BACKGROUND, DIDN'T I?
IT'S ACTUALLY CONSIDERED A SÉANCE CEREMONY IN SOME REGIONS.
AFTER ALL, CHOOSING THE RIGHT CHILD OUT OF A GROUP YOU CAN'T SEE IS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE.
I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF OUR CULPRIT WAS STEALING CHILDREN WHO HAD THE SPIRITUAL POWER TO ACTUALLY WIN.
HE PROBABLY USED A CHILD WHO STUMBLED UPON HIS SEAL TO BREAK HIMSELF FREE IN THE FIRST PLACE

A BROKEN SEAL.
...SEE? LIKE I SAID.
THE MOUNTAIN CREED STATES: "HE'LL RETURN TO LIFE, REPENTING HIS SIN, HAVING DIED BY THE SEVERE NATURE OF THE MOUNTAIN."
UNKAI-SAN'S ANCESTOR USED THAT AS HIS BASIS FOR SEALING THE GOD WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN.
THOUGHT THE ANCESTOR OF THAT PRIEST REFORMED THAT GOO
SEAL? WHOSE IS IT?
THE GOD WHO WAS HERE BEFORE SUGINO-SAMA.

SO. THE VILLAGE'S TREASURED CHILDREN ARE INSIDE AN INVISIBLE BASKET WITH HIGH SPIRITUAL ENERGY
NEITHER THE VILLAGE PEOPLE NOR SUGINO-SAMA UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT WAS.
KAGOME AGAIN?
AND LOOK! A KAGOME MARK.
"KAGOME" MEANS "BASKET MESH" AND HAS THE POWER TO MAGICALLY EXORCISE EVIL SPIRITS.
SO A "BASKET" THAT'S WOVEN WITH MANY OF THESE SYMBOLS IS A HIGHLY SPIRITUAL RECEPTACLE TO PROTECT PRECIOUS THINGS FROM EVIL INFLUENCES.
INSIDE A BASKET...
YOU MEAN THEY'RE IN A MAGICAL BARRIER?
EXACTLY. AND THERE SHOULD BE ONE MORE KAGOME ON THIS MOUNTAIN.

...ALL RIGHT, KANTAROU. I CAN SEE THE SIX STONES THAT MAKE THE KAGOME SYMBOL.
ARE YOU SURE I SHOULD BREAK THEM?
I'M SURE. BREAKING THE STONES WILL OPEN THE BARRIER AND FREE THE KIDS!
IF YOU PLEASE HARUKA.

DID YOU PRESUME THAT I WOULD FORGIVE AN ARROGANT HUMAN AND HIS LOWLY SERVANT VIOLATING THIS SACRED PRECINCT?
YOU!
ARE YOU THE OLD GOD OF THE MOUNTAIN?

FOOLISH HUMAN.
PREPARE TO FACE MY DIVINE PUNISHMENT.

YEEK!
WELL, WELL... THE DEMON-EATING TENGU.
LEGENDS CLAIM YOU'RE THE STRONGEST OF YOUKAI, BUT YOU WERE ALSO DEFEATED AND SEALED.

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND MY HATRED.
I'M PUTTING YOU DOWN NOW, KANTAROU.
YOU'RE WHAT?!
ACK!

I DON'T NEED YOUR PITY.
WHY WOULD I, WHEN I HAVE NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED?!

闘 臨
TOU Rin
者 兵
SHa PYOU
前 裂 皆
zen Retsu Kai
!! 在 陣
Zai Jin

WHY DID YOU TIE ME UP?
on Kyara Hatahara Futaran Basotsu Sowaka.
on Kyara Hatahara Futaran Basotsu Sowaka
YOU HAVE TO KEEP A REIGN ON YOUR FEELINGS, HARUKA.
on Kyara Hatahara Futaran Basotsu Sowaka.
SNAP
on Bazirato Shiboku

DAMMIT, KANTAROU!

DO I LOSE AGAIN?
HAVE WE CALMED DOWN NOW?
I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU, IF I MAY
OH. It's off.

I THINK YOU WANTED TO GO BACK HOME TO THE HEAVENS BUT YOU LOST TOO MUCH ENERGY WHEN YOU WERE SEALED
THAT'S WHY YOU NEEDED THE POWER OF THE CHILDREN
DON'T PRESUME TO UNDERSTAND ME, HUMAN.
I WANTED TO INCREASE MY POWER SO I COULD DESTROY THE VILLAGE THAT BETRAYED ME.

EVEN THOUGH YOU SHOULD RETURN TO THE HEAVENS BY THE TIME OF THE MORNING CROW...
IT'S THE TIME OF FIRST COCK CROW.
...THE RISING SUN IS ALMOST HERE.

I'M SORRY, GREAT GOD.
PLEASE RETURN TO THE MOUNTAIN.

SUGINO-SAMA.
YOU SHOULD'VE DESTROYED HIM WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE, EVEN IF THAT CAUSED GREAT BLOODSHED.
YOU ARE *UNBELIEVABLY* NAIVE.

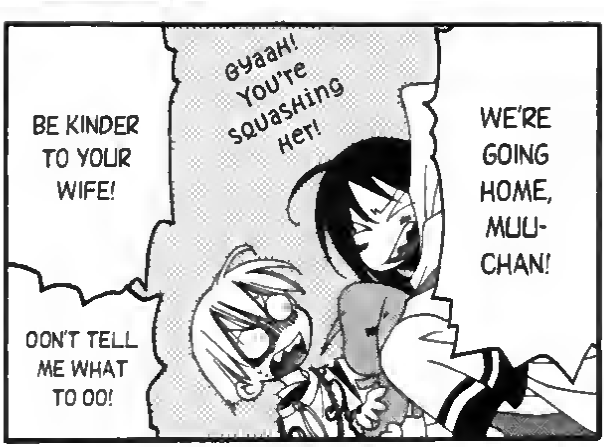
JUST SEALING HIM AGAIN DOESN'T SOLVE A THING! HE'LL BREAK OUT EVENTUALLY.
AND THEN HE'LL REPEAT EVERYTHING HE JUST DID
...IF THAT HAPPENS, I'LL REPEAT EVERYTHING I JUST DID.
DO YOU HONESTLY THINK HE'LL LEARN THAT WAY?
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO DO IT OVER AND OVER!
.....

THEN I'LL DO IT OVER AND OVER.
I'LL DO IT AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE UNTIL THE DAY I DIE.

HUFF HUFF
YOU'RE STUBBORN AS HELL DO WHAT YOU WANT!
I INTEND TO, THANK YOU.
MUU!
YUP!
YOUKAI ARE NOTHING LIKE HUMANS.
THEY DON'T CHANGE.

NO MATTER WHAT THE ERA, YOUKAI NEED TO BE FEARED AND REVERED BY HUMANS IT'S WHAT THEY LIVE FOR.
REMEMBER THAT, DEMON EATER.
AND REMEMBER THAT *THAT'S* WHY HUMANS AND YOUKAI WILL NEVER BE COMPATIBLE.

IF HUMANS AND YOUKAI AREN'T COMPATIBLE


BE KINDER TO YOUR WIFE!
Gyaah! You're squashing her!
WE'RE GOING HOME, MUU-CHAN!
DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!

...THEN DOES THE CHANGE IN ME SINCE I'VE BEEN SEALED...
...ACTUALLY MEAN SOMETHING?

I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU, KANTAROU.
YOU WERE EVERYTHING I'D HOPED YOU'D BE!
GOOD WORK, KANTAROU!
Wah ha ha
NOT *THAT* GOOD. HEH HEH.
ha ha!
ALL THE VILLAGE CHILDREN CAME BACK SAFE AND SOUND.
NOW LIFE CAN GO ON.
BY THE WAY-- ABOUT THAT THING WE TALKED ABOUT
PSST PSST
HM? OH, RIGHT.
KAN-CHAN. WE'RE GONNA MISS THE TRAIN!

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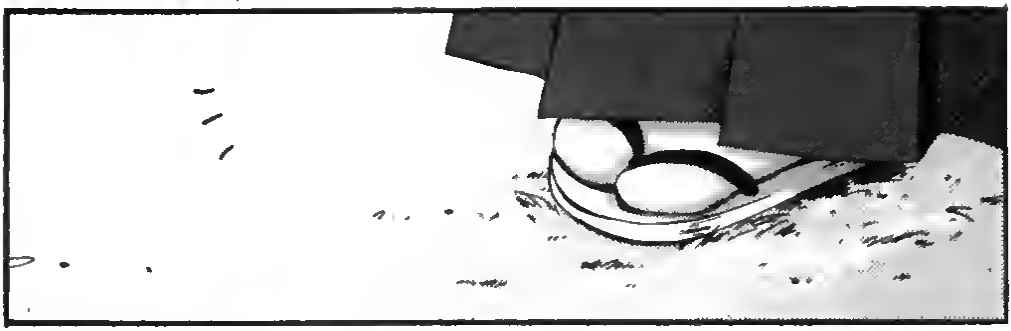


FINE!
WELL, FINE.
NOW I HAVE A SECRET WEAPON.

IGNORE!

ARE YOU STILL BROODING, HARUKA? HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU-- GOING TO A HOT SPRING IS A PRIVILEGE!
Once again, the publisher paid.

UNKAI-SAN GAVE IT TO ME.
A MAKE-YOUR-YOUKAI-LISTEN RING!
ピロリロリーン!!
Haruka.
Haruka.
Haruka
Haruka.
Haruka.
Haruka.
NOW HARUKA!
IT'S FOR NAMED YOUKAI WHO ARE BEING NAUGHTY
ISN'T IT LOVELY?
WHYYY?!
SHUt UP, YOU!

...AND SUGINO-SAMA.
MUU!
I DON'T GET IT, MUU-CHAN! WHY DO YOU LIKE THIS STUPID HUMAN?!
OH, JUST GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! ONE IDIOT TENGU IS ENOUGH, THANKS.
HUH? MUU-CHAN?
THAT DAMN PRIEST RIPPED ME OFF!
NEVER INTERRUPT A MARRIED COUPLE'S ARGUMENT!
EVERYONE SHUT UP.
MUU-CHAN, SERIOUSLY!
WHAT?! YOU'RE STILL NOT DONE WITH THAT, KAN-CHAN?!
I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I'M ALREADY PISSED-OFF ENOUGH THAT I STILL HAVE TO WRITE MY REPORT!

...I remember that the formation of "myself" involved creating an image of myself. I think my "self" fell apart when that framework crumbled.
But does losing that mean I no longer exist?

CHAPTER 6

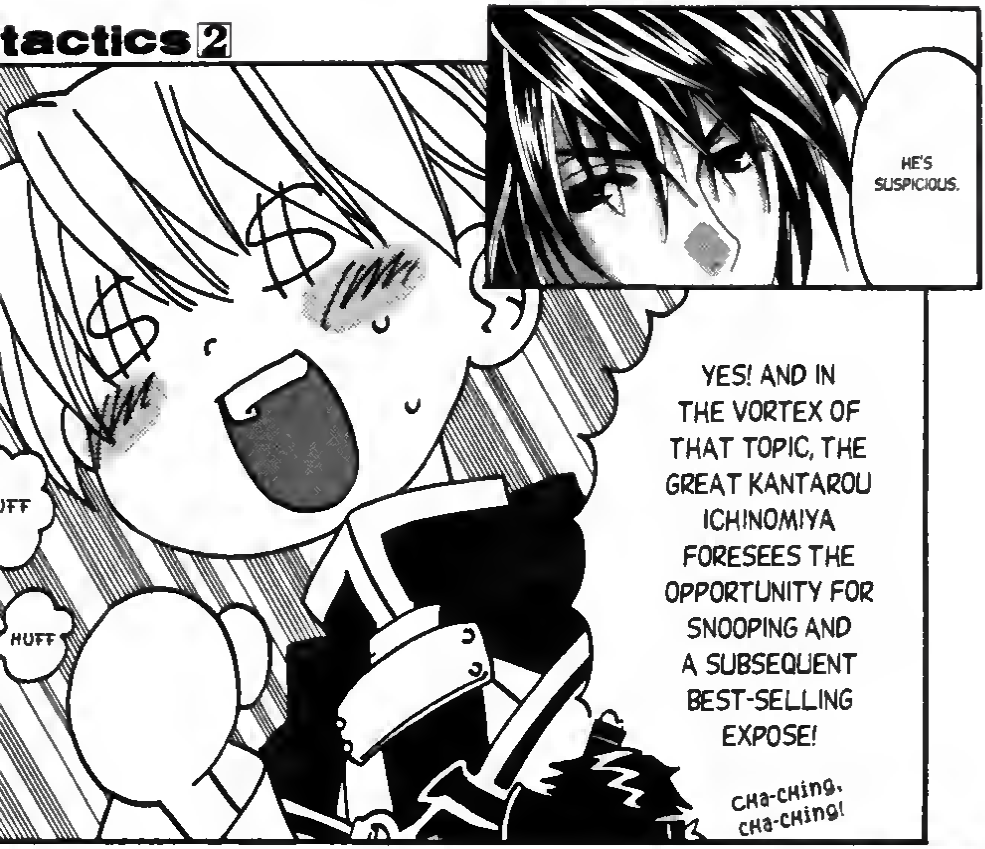
"OUR
LORD
JESUS
SAID..."

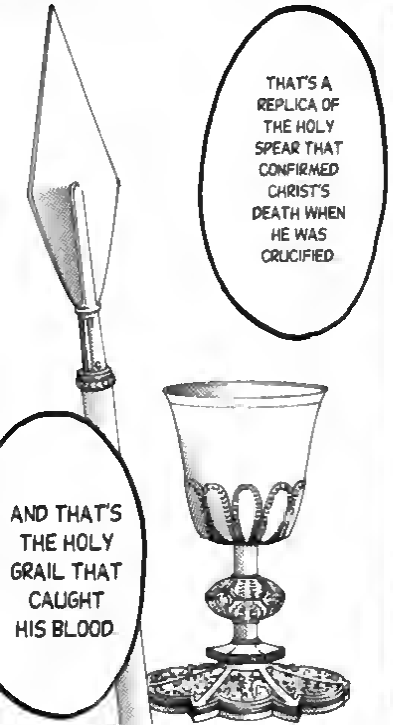
"NO, NEW WINE MUST BE POURED INTO FRESH WINESKINS."
"IF HE DOES, THE NEW WINE WILL BURST THE SKINS, THE WINE WILL BE SPILLED AND THE SKINS WILL BE DESTROYED."
"AND NO ONE POURS NEW WINE INTO OLD WINESKINS."
THESE WORDS WERE A CRITICISM...
...OF OUTDATED TRADITIONS.

ｶﾁｬﾝ
……
WAIT, HARUKA!
DON'T JUST LEAVE WITHOUT TELLING ME! HONESTLY, HOW RUDE.
BUT I'M BORED.
AND A WEIRD GIRL WAS STARING AT ME.
MY WORK IS DONE HERE FOR TODAY
THE FATHER WANTS TO MEET YOU, SO LET'S DO THAT AND THEN EAT OUT.

IS TRANSLATING FOR THAT ENGLISH PRIEST GETTING ANY EASIER?
EH. IT'S NOT THE TRANSLATION THAT'S HARD. IT'S BEING CONSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY A FOREIGN SECT AND LANGUAGE
OH! IT LOOKS LIKE MASS IS OVER
HELLO THERE, ICHINOMIYA-SENSEI
HOW'S THE INTERPRETER POSITION WORKING OUT?
THANK YOU AGAIN FOR DOING THIS FOR US, SENSEI
S-SORRY, BUT I'M NEEDED FOR CLEANUP COME ALONG, HARUKA!
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE TO BE SO DELICATE THESE DAYS.
SO THEY'RE THE ONES WHO MADE YOU WORK HERE
YES THEY'RE SOLDIERS FROM THE REFORMIST PARTY

EVERYDNE S TALKING ABOUT THE MURDER OF THOSE THREE CONSERVATIVES IN THE UPPER RANKS OF THE MILITARY
THE BIZARRE KILLINGS SEEM ALMOST SUPER NATURAL
REFORMIST PARTY? THEN.
EXACT-LY
AND, ACCORDING TO MISS REIKO S INFORMATION THE MYSTERIOUS MURDERS STARTED AROUND THE TIME THE FATHER CAME TO JAPAN. DO WE KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS HARUKA?
THERE'S NO ACTUAL EVIDENCE INVOLVED BUT FINGERS ARE PREDICTABLY BEING POINTED TO THE OPPOSING REFORMIST PARTY. MY TRANSLATING FOR THE PRIEST THEY CALLED OVER FROM ENGLAND IS TO HELP PATCH UP DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS


HE'S SUSPICIOUS.
YES! AND IN THE VORTEX OF THAT TOPIC, THE GREAT KANTAROU ICHINOMIYA FORESEES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SNOOPING AND A SUBSEQUENT BEST-SELLING EXPOSE!
cha-ching, cha-ching!
HUFF

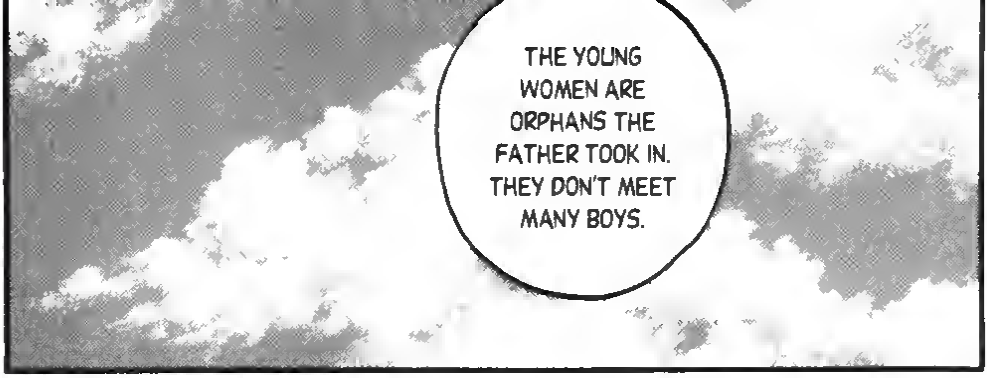

THAT'S A REPLICA OF THE HOLY SPEAR THAT CONFIRMED CHRIST'S DEATH WHEN HE WAS CRUCIFIED.
AND THAT'S THE HOLY GRAIL THAT CAUGHT HIS BLOOD.

CAREFUL, HARUKA--THOSE OBJECTS ARE PRECIOUS.
WHAT, THESE? WHAT ARE THEY?
klunk
NO LUCK on clues yet, though.
sigh
REALLY... AND I THOUGHT YOU HAD SOME SORT OF ACADEMIC PRIDE.

THE HOLY SPEAR AND HOLY GRAIL ARE ONLY SYMBOLIC.
WELL... NOT EXACTLY.
Like the jewel, the sword and the mirror?
LIKE THE OBJECTS OF WORSHIP IN A SHINTO SHRINE?
FOR WE CHRISTIANS, THE ONLY TRUE OBJECTS OF WORSHIP ARE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST'S TEACHINGS.
FATHER.
TODAY'S MASS WAS ANOTHER SUCCESS. GOOD WORK, KANTAROU.
SURE HARUKA, THIS IS MY EMPLOYER
HARUKA-SAN?! THE HARUKA-SAN?!

YOU'RE THE LEGENDARY DEMON-EATING TENGU MENTIONED IN KANTAROU'S BOOKS! I'M SO VERY IMPRESSED!
WELL, I'M OFF TO GET CHANGED. DON'T YOU RUN AWAY NOW, HARUKA.
THE FATHER'S INTERESTED IN JAPANESE YOUKAI APPARENTLY
HE TOLD THE JAPANESE ARMY HE WANTED ME AS A TRANSLATOR AFTER HE READ MY BOOK.
ARE YOU GLAD, AS WELL?
THAT'S THE HAPPIEST I'VE EVER SEEN KANTAROU.
IT MUST BE BECAUSE HE'S GLAD TO SEE YOU AT LAST.

...DON'T TOUCH ME.
THE "I DON'T UNDERSTAND JAPANESE" SMILE.
WHO THE HELL ARE THESE GIRLS?!
SQUEAL
MY, HE'S HANDSOME!
SQUEAL
SQUEAL
G
W
A
A
A
A
A
H
!


THE YOUNG WOMEN ARE ORPHANS THE FATHER TOOK IN. THEY DON'T MEET MANY BOYS.

HUH?
WAS THE GIRL WITH THE DOLL ONE OF THEM?

A LOOKER LIKE YOU PROBABLY ROCKED THEIR LITTLE WORLDS HARUKA
THEY'RE EXHAUSTING

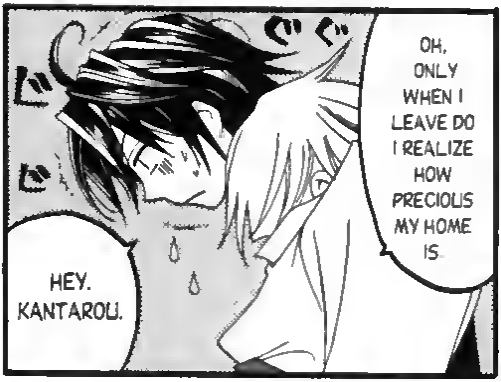
NEVER MIND.

GASP!

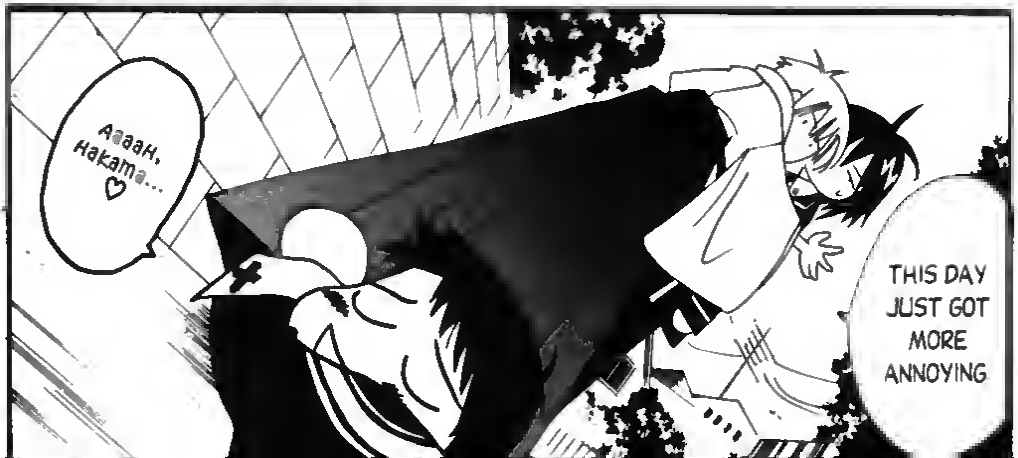
WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME?
That's all anyone's done today.

I ONLY CAME BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T SHUT UP
OW! BUT YOU ALREADY WERE CALLING ME EVERY DAY!

OH, HARUKA!
I MIIIISSED YOU!


HEY. KANTAROU.
OH, ONLY WHEN I LEAVE DO I REALIZE HOW PRECIOUS MY HOME IS

AND I'VE BEEN WORRYING THAT YOU AND YOUKO-CHAN HAVEN'T BEEN PROTECTING MY HOUSE
IT FEELS LIKE I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A YEAR!


Aaaah, Hakama♡...
THIS DAY JUST GOT MORE ANNOYING

I ADORE JAPANESE HAKAMA.
(I'm a "Hakamaniac!")
I'M AFRAID PLEATS REDUCE ME TO A LITTLE PILE OF GOO.
got kicked
HELLO THERE. THAT WAS A BIT UNSIGHTLY, WASN'T IT?
IT'S THE ASSISTANT PRIEST, FATHER EDWARDS!
YOU CAN'T OBTAIN GOD'S DIVINE PROTECTION IN THE DARKNESS.
GOD IS LIGHT, REMEMBER?
I'M SORRY. I JUST--
IT'S DANGEROUS TO BE OUTSIDE AFTER SUNDOWN
OH, KANTAROU-SAN! YOU WERE ON THE PHONE TOO LONG LAST NIGHT.
HAKA-MANIAC. WOW

桃源境
SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO EAT KANTAROU?
CHINESE FOOD...
EVER SINCE THIS PLACE OPENED AS A TRADE PORT, IT'S ATTRACTED ALL KINDS OF FOREIGNERS.
IT'S BEEN UNIQUELY TOUCHED BY THEIR DIETARY CULTURE.
ALSO, CHINESE FOOD'S AWESOME, AND I WANT TO FEED SOME TO YOU!
DO YOU SEE THAT FELLOW OVER THERE? HE'S EATING WHAT'S CALLED A NIKU-MAN—

AND MUU-CHAN!
SUGINO?
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH A GOD GETTING A CRAVING FOR YAM CHA?

YOU KNOW I *REALLY* CAME HERE BECAUSE I WAS WORRIED ABOUT DEMON EATER
THE CHINESE FOOD WAS AN AFTER THOUGHT.
I'LL FIX ANY MESSES WHEN I GET BACK.
INTERESTING. AND HOW WILL YOUR VILLAGE BE WITHOUT A DEITY?
MUU.
MRRF.
LEAVE IT, SUGINO.
WORRIED? WHY? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO HARUKA?
DON'T YOU REALIZE HOW WORRIED DEMON EATER IS ABOUT HOW MUCH HE'S CHANGED?
WHAT KIND OF MASTER ARE YOU?

HE'S LOST HIS MEMORY AND BEEN UNABLE TO EAT DEMONS SINCE YOU BROKE HIS SEAL.
UNSURPRISINGLY, HE'S HARBORING MASSIVE QUESTIONS AS TO WHY
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DEMON EATER?
.....

IT'S JUST... BOTHERING ME A LITTLE.
OH.
IS THAT ALL?
ISN'T CHINESE DELICIOUS, HARUKA?
THAT DOESN'T COUNT AS COMMUNICATION, DEMON EATER!
AGH, I hate both of you!
Can I eat this carrot?
And now the SHUMAI's here!

ANYWAY.
I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN TONIGHT.
DID YOU LIKE THAT, HARUKA?
.....
SUGINO-SAMA SEEMED UNCOMFORT-ABLE HERE.
I SUPPOSE GODS DON'T LIKE BEING AROUND FOREIGN RELIGIONS
OH. AND HARUKA?

...I'M SURE IT'LL COME BACK SOME-DAY.
DO YOU *WANT* YOUR MEMORY BACK?
I AGREE WE CAN'T FORGET HOW LONG YOU WERE ASLEEP
YOU'LL REMEMBER EVENTUALLY

tactics 2

FOOD, BATH, BED BLISS!
I TAKE IT YOU'RE STAYING OVER.

HOME SWEET HOME. THIS IS BLISS!

YOUKO, RIGHT? YEAH, I CAN'T DO THAT
WELCOME TO OUR HUMBLE ABODE. PLEASE BLESS US WITH WEALTH SO IT'S NOT QUITE SO HUMBLE
Ha Ha Ha Ha!
CLAP CLAP

DEMON EATER!
Adding up the extra cost of meals, bath water, bed—OH! And the service charge

IT'S A GOOD OMEN WHEN A GOD SPENDS THE NIGHT!

DEMON EATER?
WHAT D YOU JUMP UP THERE FOR?
YOU scared me!
SOMEONE WAS WATCHING ME AGAIN.
DID I IMAGINE IT THIS TIME?

tactics 2

OKAY. SURE.
AND SUGINO-SAMA'S STAYING OVER HUH?
STEAMY STEAMY
HARUKA-CHAN! GOOD TIMING-- KAN-CHAN'S ON THE PHONE.
YOU WANT HARUKA-CHAN?
YEAH. I THINK HE'S STILL AWAKE.
JUST LEAVE HIM TO HIMSELF, YOUKO-CHAN.
THAT I CAN DO.

HM?
...KANTA-ROU
DO YOU THINK I...
I SAW YOU TODAY
...I KNOW YES
BEDTIME DEMON EATER
...NEVER MIND.
SEE YOU LATER.
ツーツー

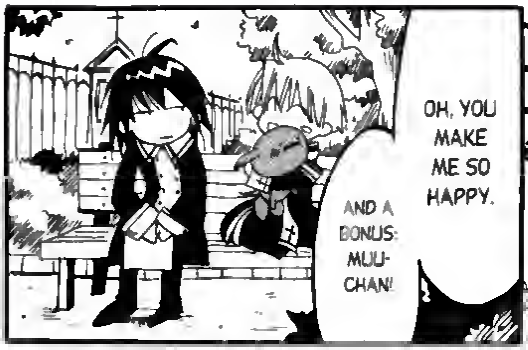
DIDN'T HE JUST TELL ME TO STAY IN AT NIGHT?
THAT LOOKS LIKE FATHER EDWARDS.
...HUH...?

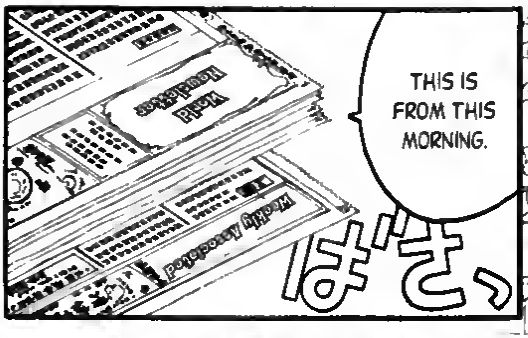
...THE HOLY SPEAR AND GRAIL REPLICAS ARE GONE.

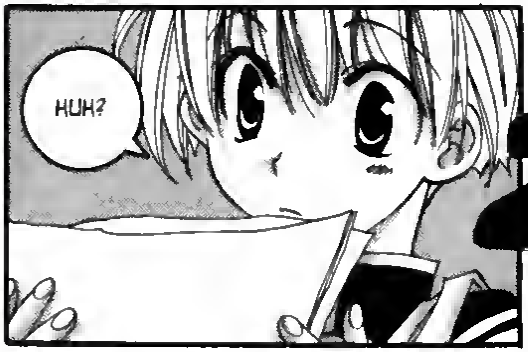
AT THIS HOUR, I MEAN
AND WHY WAS HE IN THE WORSHIPPING HALL?

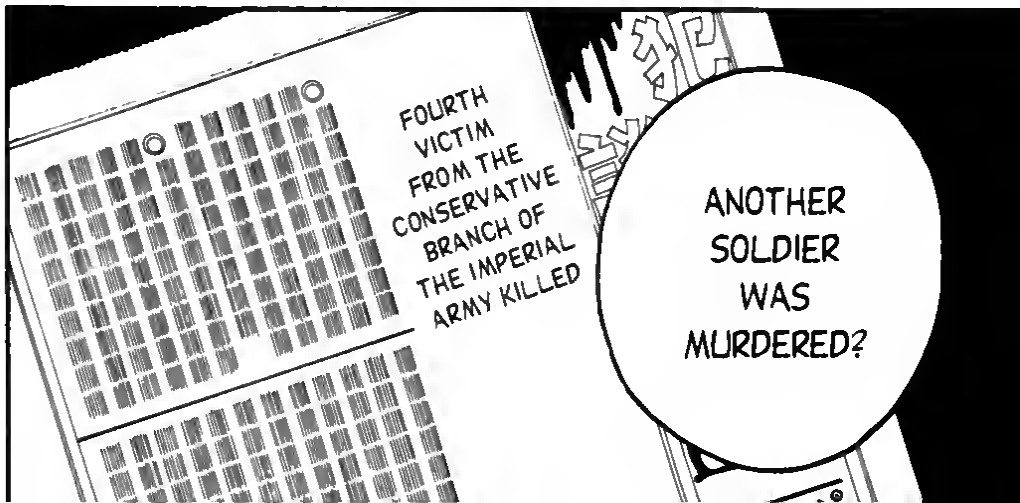
GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE! AND GOOD WORK!
GOOD MORNING, KANTAROU-SAN!
WE DID OUR VERY BEST AT CLEANING TODAY!
GOOD-- I'M AS CRITICAL AS AN IN-LAW.
LOOK WHAT CAME BACK.

YES! WE CLEAN AS BEST WE CAN TO WIN FAVOR WITH THE FATHER!
KANTAROU-SAAAAN!
WE'LL DO THAT SOMEDAY, TOO!
OH, THAT. THE FATHER PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR INE-CHAN, SO NOW SHE'LL BE WORKING IN THE HOUSE OF A WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN. SHE LEFT FIRST THING THIS MORNING.
HM...I'M COUNTING ONE FEWER HERE. DID SOMEONE OVERSLEEP?
FATHER EDWARDS, YESTERDAY, I--
I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU.
HELLO THERE.
MET WITH THAT TALL FELLOW, HM? I CAME TO TELL YOU THAT HE CAME BACK
HUH?


OH, YOU MAKE ME SO HAPPY.
AND A BONUS: MUU-CHAN!


THIS IS FROM THIS MORNING.
はさっ

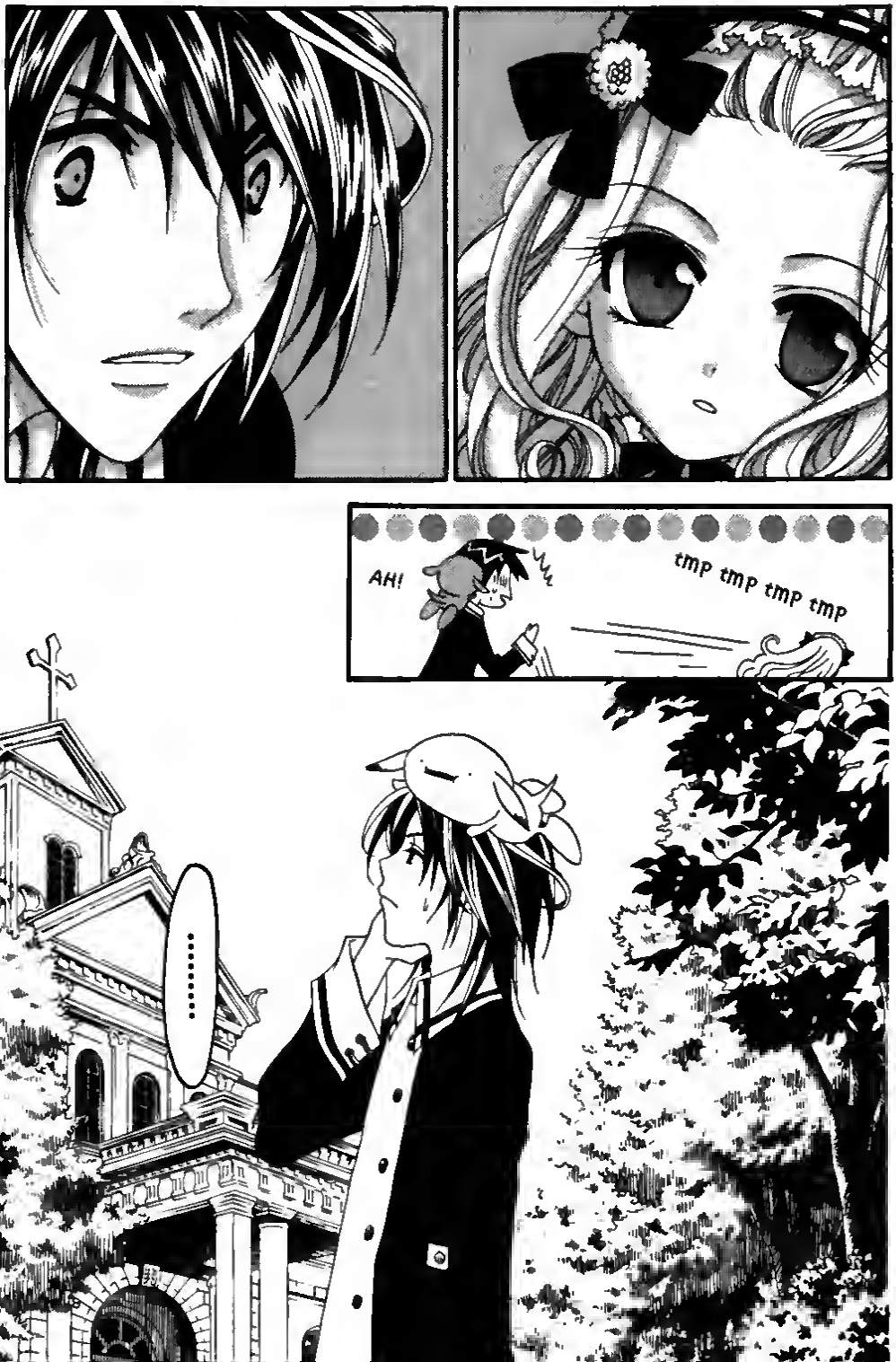

HUH?


HARUKA!
FOURTH VICTIM FROM THE CONSERVATIVE BRANCH OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY KILLED
ANOTHER SOLDIER WAS MURDERED?

.....
I JUST CAME TO BRING YOU THAT.
OH. THANK YOU FOR BRINGING THIS TO...
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE LEAVING ALREADY!

HM.. WELL, I DO HAVE WORK, I SUPPOSE.
THANK YOU FOR COMING HARUKA.
AND HARUKA...
I LIKE YOU THE WAY YOU ARE NOW.
I BECAME FRIENDS WITH YOU THE WAY YOU ARE NOW.

WHAT ARE YOU?
?
ARE YOU WITH THEM?
EXCUSE ME?
YOU DON T FEEL... HUMAN LIKE ME


AH!
tmp tmp tmp tmp
……

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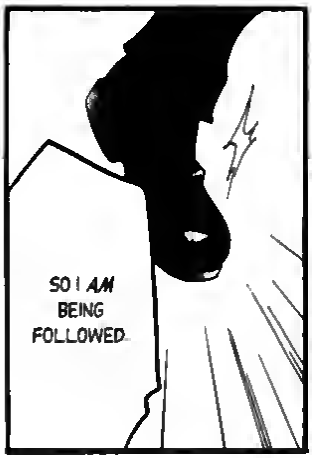

SO I AM
BEING
FOLLOWED.

キィ
キィ
……
RUSH
キキ
...I'VE NEVER SEEN A YOUKAI LIKE YOU BEFORE.

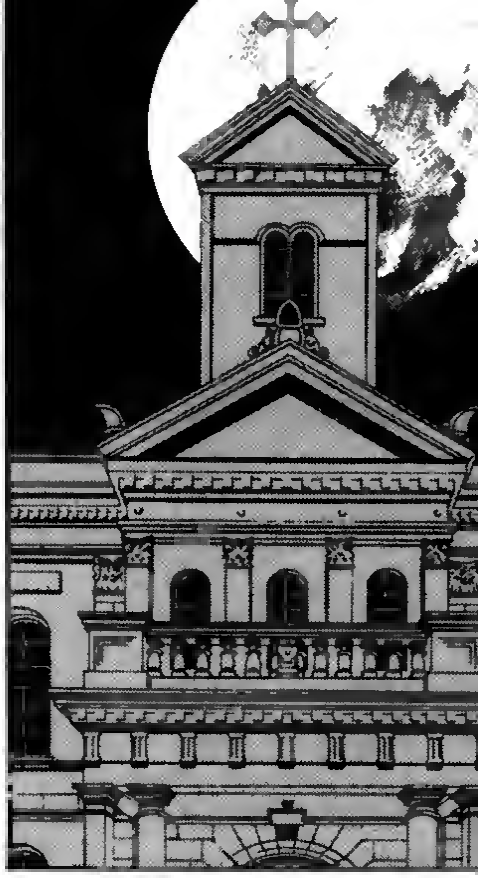
LET ME SAVE YOU SOME TIME
BAM
PICK A FIGHT, AND YOU'LL *LOSE.*

I'M BEING TESTED.
I THINK...
THAT CREATURE WAS TOO EASY.
I DON'T MIND.
I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T HAVE DURING THE WORKDAY. I'M SORRY.
I HEARD YOU MET WITH HARUKA TODAY.

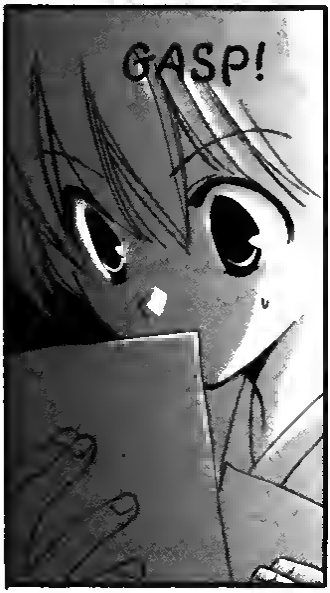
I'M VERY INTERESTED IN THE MONSTERS OF JAPAN
.....
THEY'RE AN EXISTENCE CLOSE TO GOD, THE DEVIL, AND HUMANS ALL AT ONCE.
SOME SAY THAT JAPANESE MONSTERS ARE THE FORMS OF GODS FALLEN TO RUIN
THAT MAKES THEM VERY CLOSE TO WHAT I MYSELF ADMIRE.
WHY DID YOU EMPLOY ME AS YOUR INTERPRETER, FATHER?

FATHER, I'VE BROUGHT MORE TEA.
SET IT THERE, PLEASE.
WILL YOU EXCUSE ME, FATHER? I HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK UP
HELLO. YOU SEEM TO LIKE THE FATHER THERE.
OF COURSE! HE'S VERY KIND, AND I LOVE HIM DEARLY.
I WISH I COULD BE OF MORE USE TO HIM, BUT I'M NOT VERY GOOD AT CLEANING.
IF IT'S CLEANING YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT, I CAN HELP YOU WITH THAT.

TIME TO CALL HOME AGAIN.
After all, I don't get charged for using the phone!



BUT LET ME JUST CHECK TO MAKE SURE THAT...


GASP!

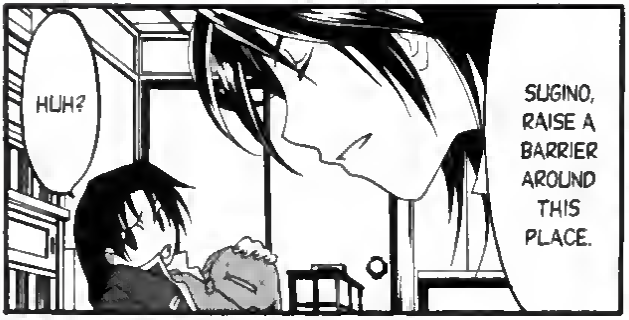
WHAT ARE THESE PAPERS?
BUT I ALREADY CLEANED UP IN HERE.
HM?

GOOD. THEY'RE STILL HERE TODAY.

INVESTIGATIVE DOCUMENTS?
BUT... THEY'RE ALL ABOUT HARUKA!
CLEANING AT *THIS* HOUR, KANTAROU ICHINOMIYA?

YOU'RE SO DILIGENT.
FATHER!
WHAT ARE THESE?
NO, IT'S JUST... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE SO INTERESTED IN HARUKA.
AH--SO YOU'VE FOUND ME OUT.
YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST ASKED ME FOR--
HOW EMBARRASSING.

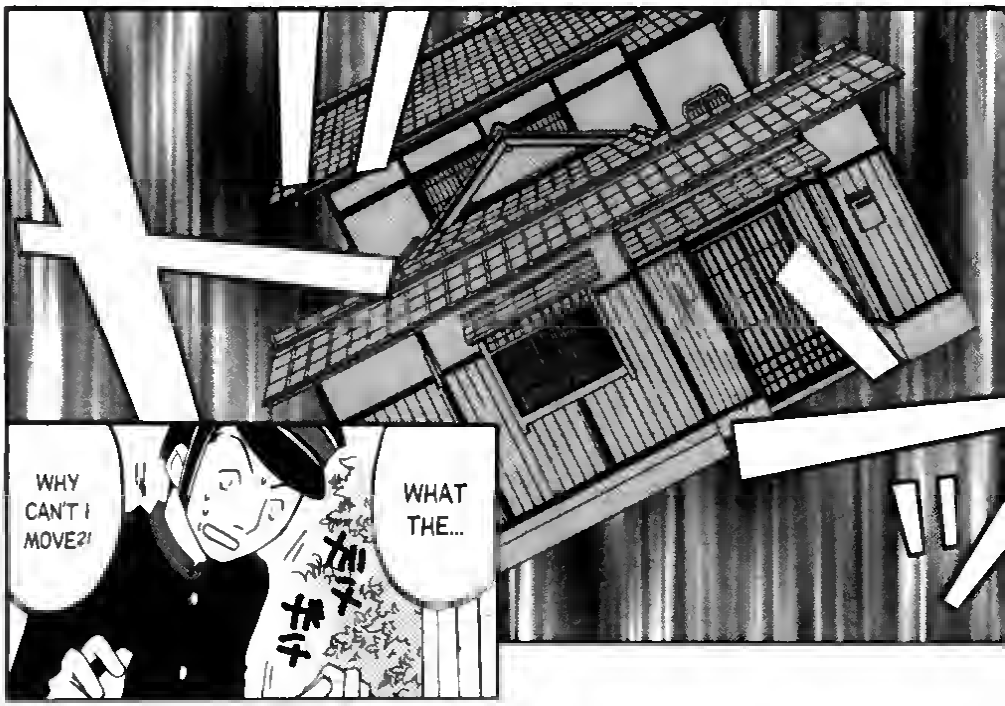
.....
...YOU HAD TO WORK FOR ME.
THIS IS WHY...


HUH?
SUGINO, RAISE A BARRIER AROUND THIS PLACE.

KAN-CHAN DIDN'T CALL TODAY. HE MUST BE BUSY FOR A CHANGE

FINE, FINE.

NOW.


WHY CAN'T I MOVE?!
WHAT THE...
ガリ
ガリ

SO YOU'RE THE ONE.
WHAT'S A SOLDIER DOING HERE?! EW!
I DON'T APPRECIATE BEING STALKED.
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
fwump
GYAAAAH!
MUU-CHAN'S REALLY GOOD AT GETTING PEOPLE TO TALK.
HUH?
YOU DIRTY--
DEMON EATER!

SPLOOSH
ANSWER ME THIS, KANTAROU ICHINOMIYA
HOW IS IT THAT YOU GET THE CREATURE TO OBEY YOU?
HAAH!
HCGK
DON'T MAKE ME HURT YOU FURTHER.
HAH...
HAAH...
GHCK!

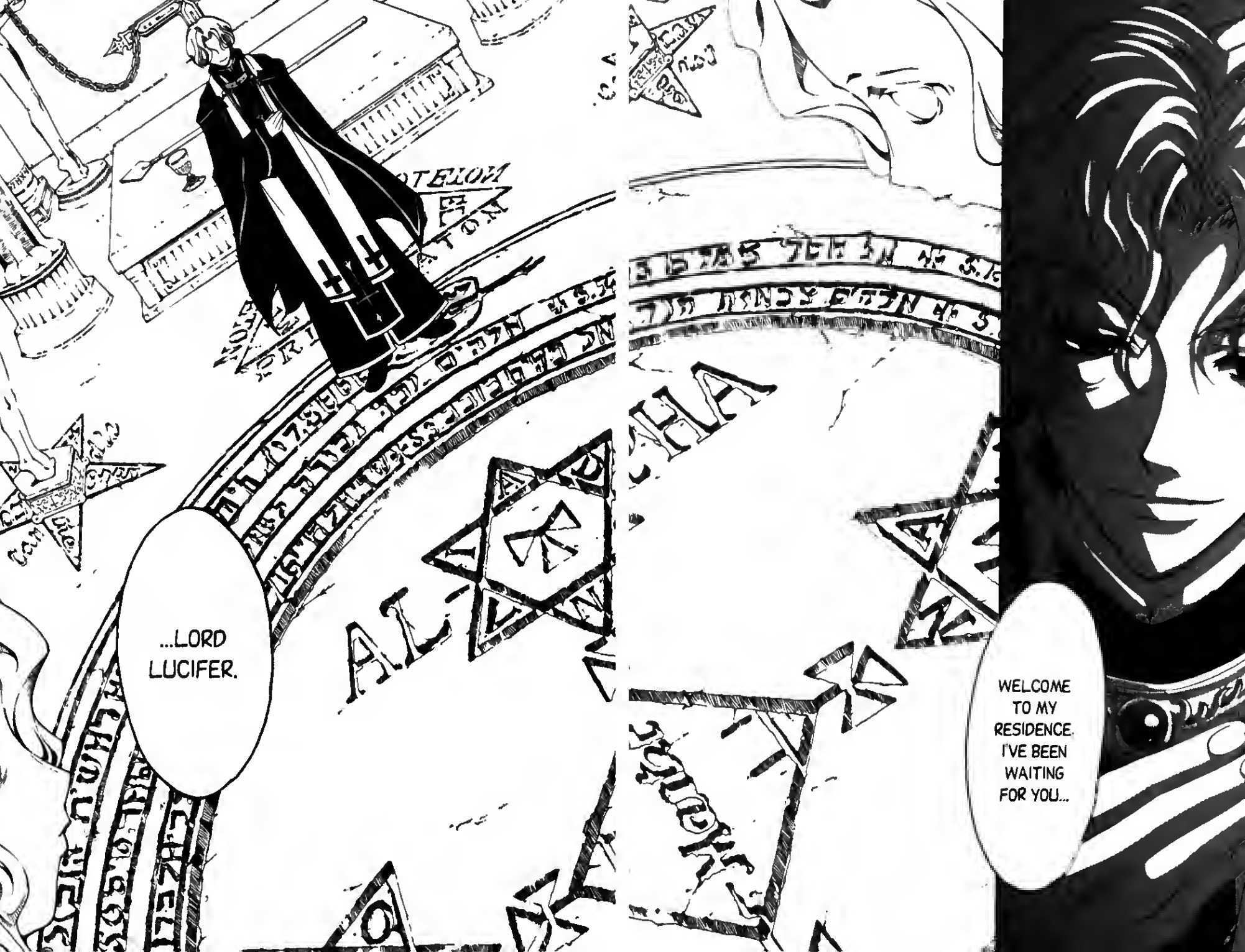
I KNEW YOU WEREN'T AN ORDINARY PRIEST.
WHY ARE YOU AFTER HARUKA?
HE HASN'T FULLY AWAKENED YET.
I'M GOING TO HELP HIM REGAIN HIS TRUE AND MAGNIFICENT FORM.

THEN I MUST PREPARE.
I'M SURE HE'LL BE MOST PLEASED WITH ME.
...I SEE.
HE IS SURELY A FALLEN ANGEL.
SLAM
A SHIVER RAN THROUGH ME WHEN I READ HIS DATA, YOU KNOW.
HIS POWER
HIS ARROGANCE
—AND THE THUNDER HE COMMANDS.

THERE'S A LOT OF EVIL LEAKING OUT OF THIS PLACE.
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT PRIEST.
WHAT KIND OF A RELIGION WOULD TORTURE KANTAROU TO GET AT YOU, DEMON EATER?
IT'S THE WORD OF THE DEVIL.

THE THINGS HE SAYS ARE SWEET...
...BUT HE LEADS YOU TO RUIN.
DON'T LET HIM TRICK YOU.
UM, OKAY.
LET'S GO.
ぴと～
!
WHAT A CREEPY LITTLE GIRL!

THESE CANDLES ARE MAKING A PATH, DEMON EATER.
THE DEEPER WE GO DOWN HERE...
...THE THICKER THE SENSE OF EVIL.
THAT'S SUSPICIOUS AS HELL!
AS HELL!
カツ
JUST BE QUIET.
カツ
STAIRS LEADING DOWN...?


...LORD LUCIFER.
WELCOME TO MY RESIDENCE. I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU...

LORD WHO?
HE WAS USING THE ORPHAN GIRLS AS SACRIFICES TO SUMMON DEVILS FROM HELL.
HE WAS BEHIND THE DEATHS OF THE SOLDIERS, TOO, AT THE REQUEST OF THE REFORMIST PARTY.
THAT PRIEST WAS ONLY PRETENDING TO BE A HOLY MAN--HE ACTUALLY WORSHIPS SATAN
ぱら
GAH!
KANTA' ROU!

INDEED... I MURDER FOR A LIVING.
NOW I CAN FINALLY OBTAIN YOU LUCIFER.
BUT MY TRUE AIM WAS TO AWAKEN YOU
YOU MEAN... YOU CAN MAKE ME WHAT I USED TO BE?

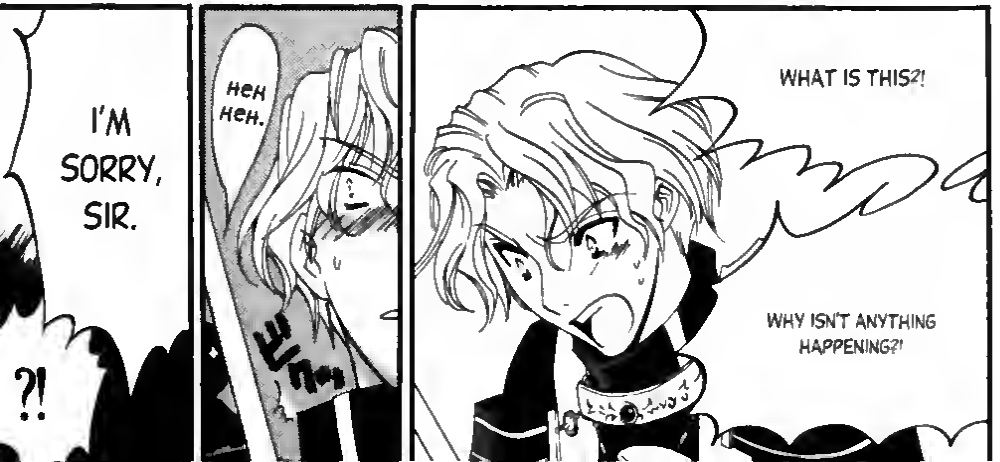
HERE-- TAKE THIS CURSED HOLY SPEAR.
IT HAS ALREADY DRUNK THE BLOOD OF NINETY-EIGHT PEOPLE.
FATHER EDWARDS!
AND NOW... I WILL REACH 100.
NINETY-EIGHT?!

GO FORTH AND IMPALE THESE TWO HUMANS WITH YOUR OWN UNHOLY HAND!
GRANT ME MY WISH, LORD LUCIFER!
slice

OW!
SOMEONE COULD'VE *ATTEMPTED* TO CATCH ME
THIS IS UNBELIEVABLY STUPID
I'M NOT LUCIFER, WHAT'S-YOUR-FACE.
DAMN! YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE

I'LL JUST HAVE TO FORCE YOU TO OBEY MY COMMANDS!

SILENCE

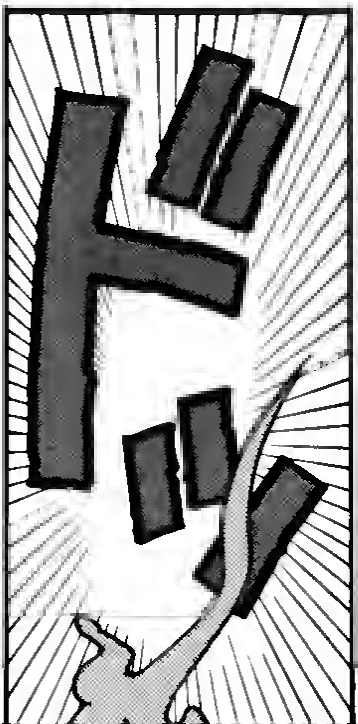

I'M SORRY, SIR.
?!
HEH HEH.
WHAT IS THIS?!
WHY ISN'T ANYTHING HAPPENING?!

What!?
I TOOK SPECIAL CARE TO CLEAN THAT SPEAR AND CHALICE.
IN CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM, SOME ASSOCIATE THE HOLY SPEAR WITH MASCULINITY AND THE HOLY GRAIL WITH FEMININITY.
SOME SAY THAT WHEN THE TWO OF THEM "AWAKEN" TO SEXUAL MATURITY, THEY CAN GRANT ANY WISH
IN THE PRIEST'S RITES, HE COATED THEM IN THE BLOOD OF THOSE HE'D SLAIN AND THE GIRLS HE'D SACRIFICED, HOPING TO MAKE THE RELICS SEXUALLY MATURE AND THUS AUGMENT THEIR SPIRITUAL POWER. HOWEVER..

NOォォ!!
I WASHED THEM WITH HOLY WATER GOOD LUCK MAKING THEM WORK NOW.
THEN I'LL OVERWHELM YOU WITH SHEER NUMBERS!

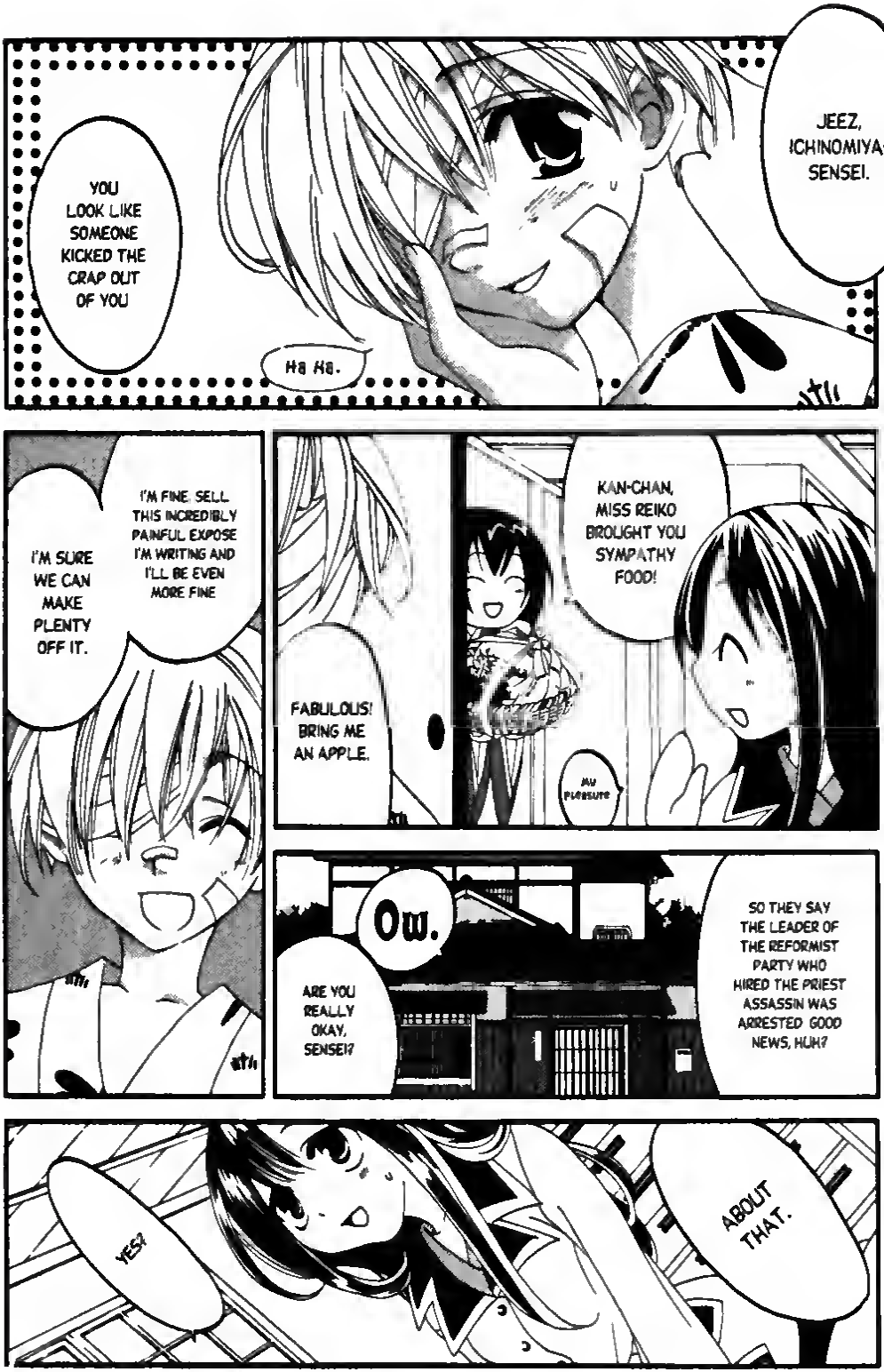
HM...
THIS ISN'T REALLY MY SPECIALTY.
SHOULD I GO WITH THIS ONE? OR MAYBE THIS?

HAHA HA
NUMBERS ARE ALL THEY'VE GOT. THESE GUYS BLOW. ♡
eeek!



RAWR!
AAH!

I'M AN EXORCIST FROM THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND!...
I'M THE SUPERVISOR IN CHARGE OF KEEPING CHRISTIANITY ON TRACK IN JAPAN.
PHEW... IT LOOKS LIKE THE HAKAMA IS SAFE.
FATHER EDWARDS!
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP, BY THE WAY. DESPITE GETTING THIS CLOSE TO THE FATHER, I WAS HAVING TROUBLE FINDING SOLID EVIDENCE ON HIM.
SHOO!
SHOO!
UM... COULD YOU CLARIFY?
YOU SOUND.. SURPRISINGLY IMPORTANT.
And you're a Hakamaniac.
Sorry Sorry give up!!
POWER...


JEEZ, ICHINOMIYA-SENSEI.
YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE KICKED THE CRAP OUT OF YOU
Ha Ha.
I'M FINE. SELL THIS INCREDIBLY PAINFUL EXPOSE I'M WRITING AND I'LL BE EVEN MORE FINE
I'M SURE WE CAN MAKE PLENTY OFF IT.
KAN-CHAN, MISS REIKO BROUGHT YOU SYMPATHY FOOD!
FABULOUS! BRING ME AN APPLE.
Ow.
ARE YOU REALLY OKAY, SENSEI?
SO THEY SAY THE LEADER OF THE REFORMIST PARTY WHO HIRED THE PRIEST ASSASSIN WAS ARRESTED. GOOD NEWS, HUH?
YES?
ABOUT THAT.

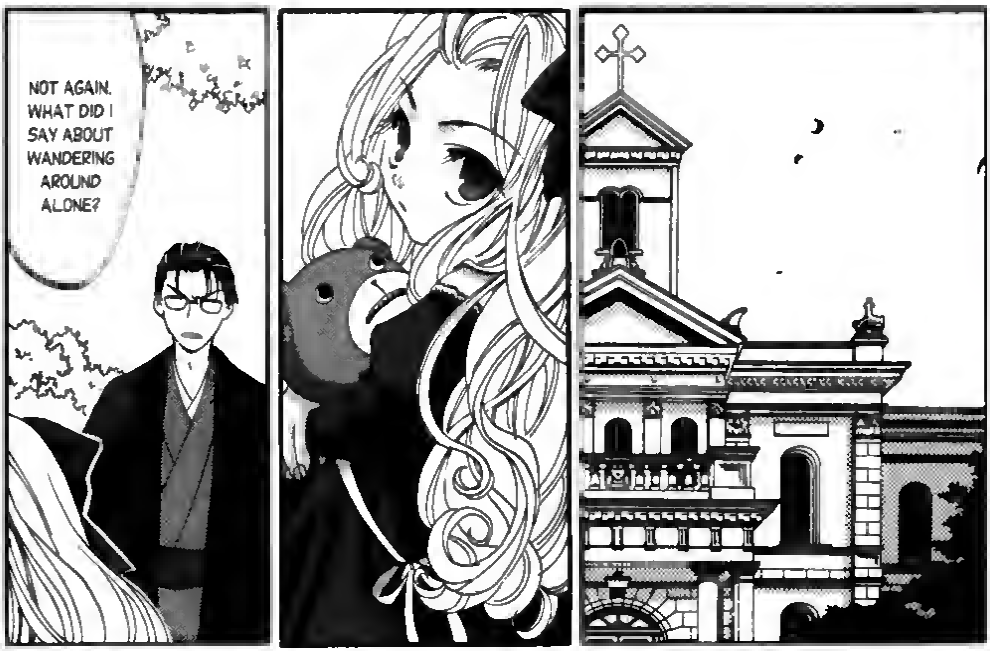
tactics 2

AT ANY RATE, I'M ON THE CLOCK. TOODLES!
SAME HERE.
WELL... WE'RE SORTA BEING PRESSURED BY THE POWERS THAT BE TO SHUT UP
Here's to another month of poverty
And now we've got a god under our roof who won't stop eating
WAIT, HARUKA
I'M LEAVING SOME APPLE SLICES HERE.
HARUKA?
CLATTER
OW! SON OF A--

AND I'M SORRY.
REALLY.
.....
UM.. THANK YOU FOR COMING TO SAVE ME
I DID REALIZE YOU WERE SUFFERING...
..BUT I PRETENDED NOT TO SEE IT.
HARUKA?
ARE YOU MAD AT ME?
HE LEFT.
ER...I WONDER HOW MUCH OF THAT HE HEARD?

IF THE OLD HARUKA CAME BACK...

...WOULD HE STILL HAVE ME?



ARE YOU TALKING TO YOURSELF AGAIN?
DON'T BREAK YOUR OWN HEART
YOU DON'T WANT THE PIECES TO FORM A CAGE.
COME ON, LET'S GO HOME.
tactics 2 END

tactics

IN THE NEXT VOLUME OF

tactics

Kantarou and company visit a small village in an attempt to safeguard the annual fortune-telling festival that has recently been surrounded by strange and eerie misfortune. The head of the family of fortune-tellers is a beautiful and wealthy widow, but any man who dares approach her is punished by unseen forces. Not to mention that her twin daughters, Mai and Miyabi, may have secrets of their own which could prove dangerous for Kantarou and Haruka alike! Later, Kantarou enters a competition with his skeptic colleague, Hasumi, wherein the two are commissioned by their old professor to seek out a kappa's sacred bamboo ladle. All this and more in the next volume of Tactics!

Language and Culture Nates an Tactics vol. 2!

Chapter 4.

Special annex on Japanese food

~Ramune--a refreshing, almost bubble-gum flavored soda. Its distinctive bottle is sealed with a glass marble in the neck, which must be knocked out of place to drink the beverage

~Agemanju—deep-fried sweet bean dumplings. Mmm...

~Anmitsu—a traditional dessert, often served in summer, which features sweet bean paste ("anko") and often cubed coconut or almond jelly. It's light, sweet and very refreshing!

~An "S": When Kantorou mentions that Yakka is an "S," he's making a snide reference to her supposed preferences when it comes to S&M. Apparently (ahem) she likes to be on the domineering side of things.

~Geisha. In spite of what popular culture has led many to believe, geisha are not ladies of the night. They are hired for their clever conversation and artistic skills. (Geisha are masters of traditional song and dance). While geisha have been known to engage in romances with select patrons, it is far from the rule, and it is not a favor that can be purchased. So, while Yakko may have ulterior motives when she invites Haruka to pay her a visit, her request is personal rather than professional.

~Kan-chan's chant: Kantarou seems to mix a variety of spiritual traditions into his youkai-busting business. In this particular instance, he is using onmyoujitsu, which is derived from Chinese Taoist practice. It literally means "yin-yang magic," and it deals with the balance of naturol forces.

~Paper talisman. Kantorou is referring to what are called "ofuda." These are paper charms inscribed with various combinations of mystical symbols and prayers, said to ward off evil.

~Hokoro Kantorou actually built a specific kind of small shrine, a "hakora," for the Demon-Eating Tengu when he was young. If you ever go to Japan, you'll likely see many similar small shrines on the edge of roads or even on the corners of city streets!

Chapter 5:

~Taro Uroshima. The Japanese Rip van Winkle! Taro Uroshima was a fisherman who saved the life of a sea turtle and was taken on a magical ride to the underwater home of the dragon king. When he returned to land with a box that he was forbidden to open, he discovered that decades had passed in his absence and all his friends and family had passed away. When he ignored the dragon's prohibition and opened the box, he instantly aged into a decrepit old man.

~Putting your hand on your chest. I had to call in native speaker help to decode this, and it still didn't translate well. It's apparently a gesture meant to indicate, "Look who's talking."

~Magical children. The illustrations here represent the stories of Momotaro, a boy born from a peach pit who joined up with a rooster, a dog and a monkey to fight demons, and Kintoro, a child of legendary strength. (The symbol on the front of his bib says "kin" or "gold")

Chapter 6:

~Objects of warship in a Shinto shrine—Goshintai. Literally, "god body," these are objects that are said to contain the spirits of deities, or represent them. Examples include the Imperial Treasures of the Jewel, the Sword and the Mirror, which are said to be relics of the gods (and show up frequently in anime and manga!)

~Engrish. You can't tell from this translation, but, in the original book, our demon-warshipping priest actually had his lines written in English with Japanese subtitles underneath. This was presumably for the cool effect, but unfortunately that was marred for native speakers by the sheer incomprehensibility of a few of the lines. What you are reading is a translation of the subtitles.

~Editor's pick for favorite puns. "Hakamaniac" is the combo of the word "hakama" and "maniac" to describe one who is head-over-heels for this particular piece of Japanese garb. Hakama are pleated trousers worn by both men and women, although rarely today outside of ritual functions (Women wear them for graduation ceremonies, men for formal events, and both genders when practicing certain martial arts). I dig hakama, too, which is why Father Edwards gets this award.

~The golden carp. Youko makes reference here to shachihokou, a mythical carp with the head of a lion that often ornaments the peaks of Japanese roofs. It is said to bring rain, along with general good fortune. Too bad Sugino doesn't feel similarly obliging.